A **BRAND NEW BUMPER FIGHTING FANTASY** MINI ADVENTURE!
CAN **YOU** PROVE YOUR WORTH IN **BONES OF THE BANISHED**?

ISSUE 5 | FEBRUARY 2011

Fighting Fantazine

THE FIGHTING FANTASY FAN MAGAZINE

TYRANNOSAURUS REX!

JOHN SIBBICK IS KING OF THE DINOSAURS

SURVEY RESULTS SPECIAL!

ALL 70 GAMEBOOKS AS RATED BY **YOU** THE FANS...

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

GRAHAM BOTTLEY TALKS ABOUT THE RETURN OF **AFF**

letter from the editor

Well, here we are – finally! It took us a while, but we can finally present you with the first half of the results from last year's survey of *Fighting Fantasy* fandom. Given we hope to feature a letters column in this fan magazine, for people to air their thoughts on all things to do with *Fighting Fantasy* and gamebooks in general, perhaps you might like to write us and express your feelings on the results. Do agree or disagree? What about the opinions of our essay writers for the top ten placing books?

A letters page is just one of many things we'd like to see in the magazine, reviews are another. That should turn up next issue if everything goes to plan, penned by yours truly unless someone between now and then volunteers to write the reviews instead. Meanwhile, the biggest item of the wish list of this magazine is eager artists willing to have a go at doing the colour cover art or the black & white interior art for the mini adventures (or even both if you are that keen!). If we can get enough together, then the commitment might be only one issue a year. If you think you can contribute in this manner, or know someone else who might be able to, then get in touch with the magazine and let us know.

We're also happy to hear from you if you have an idea for something that could appear in the magazine. We've got a list of items suggested by survey respondents (that will be covered in the other half of the results next issue), but it is simply not possible for the main team who helped launch this magazine to do it all. So, don't hesitate. Get stuck in and start writing or drawing material for future issues!

But what about this issue? This is our longest issue to date, although you wouldn't pick it from the contents page! With a bit of an unintentional dinosaurs theme, we kick of with illustrator John Sibbick filling us in on what he's been doing since working on *Fighting Fantasy*, followed in turn by the dinosaur-filled bumper length mini adventure *Bones of the Banished* from Brett Schofield.

There follows the survey results and the second part of Andrew Wright's look into how to pen a gamebook adventure of your own. However, between these two is sandwiched a quick second interview. This one is with Graham Bottley, the man behind the relaunch of *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*, and is one many ways the series is being renewed and redeveloped this year if the news page is anything to go by.

Finally, I have to point out that next year *Fighting Fantasy* turns 30. The big three-oh. And we here at the magazine would like to do something special in our pages to celebrate that face come August 2012. So, put your thinking caps on and send us in your ideas on how this magazine might go about celebrating such an important birthday!

Until next time, as the old saying goes: "May your STAMINA never fail!"

Alex

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Fightingfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page

CONTRIBUTIONS
Contributions to the fanzine in the form of letters, articles, reviews, fanfiction, artwork, comics et cetera are welcomed and readily invited. These can be sent to the editor via e-mail as long as it is a standard format like JPEG and the scan is of high quality.

NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE:
March 4th 2011

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Fighting Fantazine

THE FIGHTING FANTASY FAN MAGAZINE

ISSUE 5 | FEBRUARY 2011

FEATURES

06 interview:

DUNGEONS & DINOSAURS

Illustrator **John Sibbick** joined the *Fighting Fantasy* world in 1986 and talks covers, interior art, and dinosaurs with *Fighting Fantazine*.

STEVE JACKSON and IAN LIVINGSTONE present
MASKS OF MAYHEM
adventure in which YOU are the hero!
23

18 bumper mini adventure:

BONES OF THE BANISHED

by **Brett Schofield**

YOUR tribe calls the Plain of Bones home and the death of your chieftain forces the start of the Rite of Banishment. All of the warriors are forced to venture into the danger-riddled wilderness. The one who returns with the most impressive trophy of conquest will become the new chieftain. Do YOU have what it takes or will your remains join the other bones of the banished?

66 Turn to Paragraph 400

In the first part of the survey results we count down the gamebooks to reveal the top ten, each with an essay extolling their virtues!

94 interview:

Revised Fighting Fantasy

Advanced Fighting Fantasy is making a comeback via Arion Games. Author of the revised handbooks, **Graham Bottley**, talks to *Fighting Fantazine* about the plans for the series.

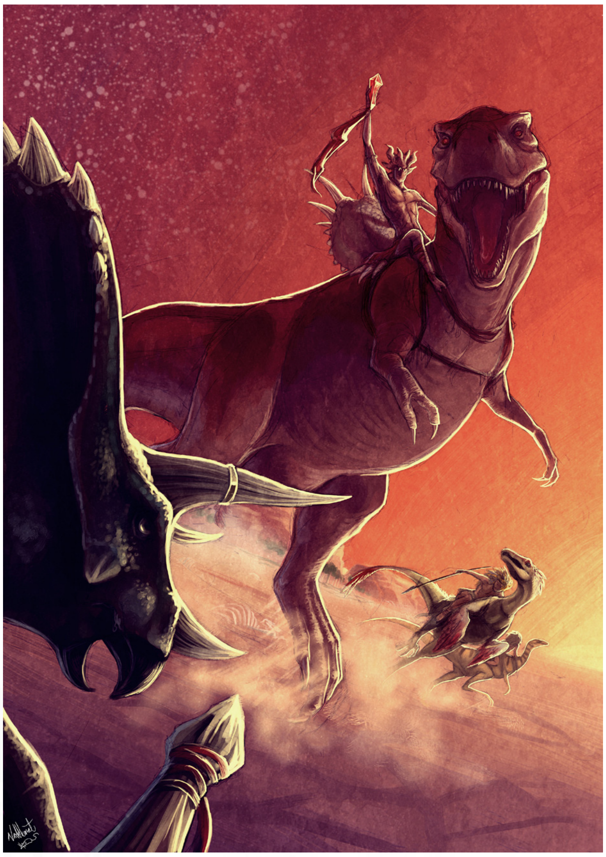
OTHERS

96 THE ADVENTURE GAME PART 2

REGULARS

04 OMENS & AUGURIES
100 FIGHTING FANTASY COLLECTOR
102 FIGHTING DANTASY

Turn to paragraph **1**.



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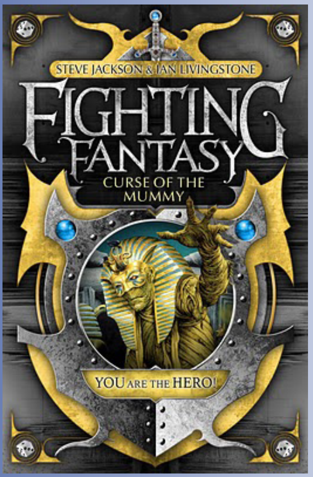
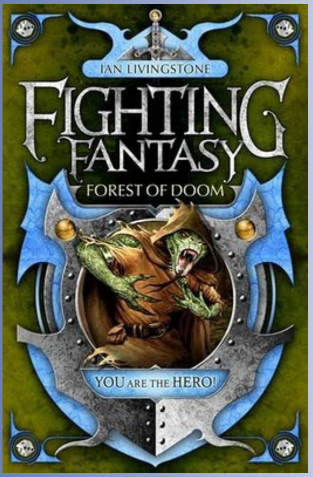
With thanks to: Graham Bottley, John Sibbick, and the rest of the team at *Titan Rebuilding* for their support. Plus, a huge thank you to outgoing Wizard Books editor Nick Sidwell for his support of the magazine from the start.

Where possible, permission from the artists has been sought for the reproduction of *Fighting Fantasy* art. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Editor. "Something inside rattles when you shake the box."

OMENS & AUGURIES





Fighting Fantasy news for 2011

At the time of this writing, reissues of *Curse of the Mummy* and *The Forest of Doom* are available in stores. Each one retails for 5.99 GBP. *Armies of Death* and *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* are still scheduled for April.

Fighting Fantasy now migrates to another two electronic platforms: PlayStation 3 and PlayStation Portable. The first title converted will be *Talisman of Death*. The game can be played using the classic *Fighting Fantasy* system or with a new set of visual and real-time videogame mechanics developed specifically for this version. The game will be available for download via the PSN Store in Europe and "America". The official *Fighting Fantasy* site at www.fightingfantasy.com offers screenshots and more information. No firm release dates have been given yet.

Arion Games, the people responsible for the re-release of the *Maelstrom* Elizabethan RPG, are developing a new version of the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* role-playing game. It will be accompanied by reprints of the classic *Out of the Pit* and *Titan* supplements. This new edition reportedly introduces a lot of changes to character creation, the magic and combat systems. The core rulebook will be available for 19.99 GBP and each of the supplements for 16.99 GBP. Slated for a May release, they can be pre-ordered from shop.cubicle7store.com. The designers' official website is at www.arion-games.com/AFF.html. See the interview with Graham Bottley elsewhere this issue for more information.

Fighting Fantasy has also found its way to the Kindle reader. *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* should be available very soon for this device. No price has been announced yet. The developing company, Worldweaver, is already working on *The Citadel of Chaos* and promises to release a new *Fighting Fantasy* book every month. Let's keep our finger crossed. Visit www.worldweaver.com/fightingfantasy.aspx for more info.

The iPhone/iPod Touch/iPad version of *City of Thieves* is now available from Big Blue Bubble. Get it at the iTunes store for 2.99 USD.

Lone Wolf

The much-delayed new edition of *Lone Wolf* 15, *The Darke Crusade*, is announced for February. It can be bought at www.mongoosepublishing.com for 15.00 GBP. Meanwhile the following two supplements for the *Lone Wolf Multiplayer Gamebook* are in the works: *Book of the Magnakai*, which will allow you to incorporate Magnakai disciplines into your characters, and *The Darklands*, a setting book.

Fabled Lands

Certainly one of the biggest news of the year is the re-release of the first four gamebooks in the classic *Fabled Lands* series (*The War-Torn Kingdom*, *Cities of Gold and Glory*, *Over the Blood-Dark Sea* and *The Plains of Howling Darkness*). These versions are essentially the same as the old ones except for corrected errors. If there is enough commercial interest in these books, author Dave Morris has promised to finish writing books 7-12 in the series, which never saw the light of day. The books are available only through online sellers like Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Price is 5.99 GBP each.

The iPhone version of the first *Fabled Lands* book (*The War-Torn Kingdom*) is also available. Check out megara-entertainment.com for more info. The app can be downloaded for 4.99 GBP. It includes coloured artwork by Russ Nicholson.

The release of the new *Fabled Lands* RPG core rulebook has been pushed back to June 2011, and the first sourcebook to July. No details about pricing have been given yet.

DestinyQuest

Apparently the full-system fantasy gamebook genre refuses to die. Author Michael J. Ward has released one such book titled *The Legion of Shadow*. At a whopping 440 pages, this is certainly a lot of bang for 7.49 GBP. It is the first in a planned series. Here is a blurb from www.amazon.co.uk:

> *DestinyQuest: The Legion of Shadow takes its influence from two genres, the 'choose your own adventure' book and the computer role-playing game. It uses an innovative map system to allow readers to experience exciting quests, battle fearsome monsters and discover valuable rewards. Through their adventures, the reader can customise their hero from a selection of 400 items and 80 special abilities, allowing them to take on ever-greater challenges as they seek to save the kingdom from the sinister Legion of Shadow.*

The series has its own website at www.destiny-quest.com.

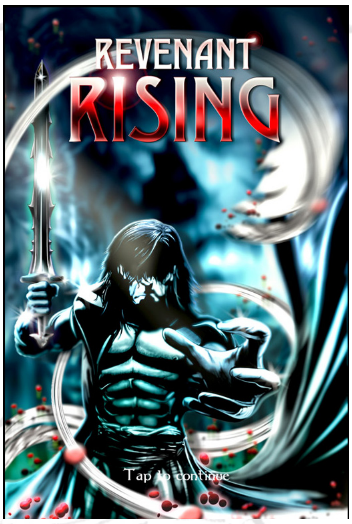
Choices

Author Jasan Barnett has also been busy bringing us a new gamebook. *The Wounded Falcon* is a significantly expanded version of a gamebook that was previously available for free. It will become available in March for 12.95 AUD. There is also a sequel in the works.

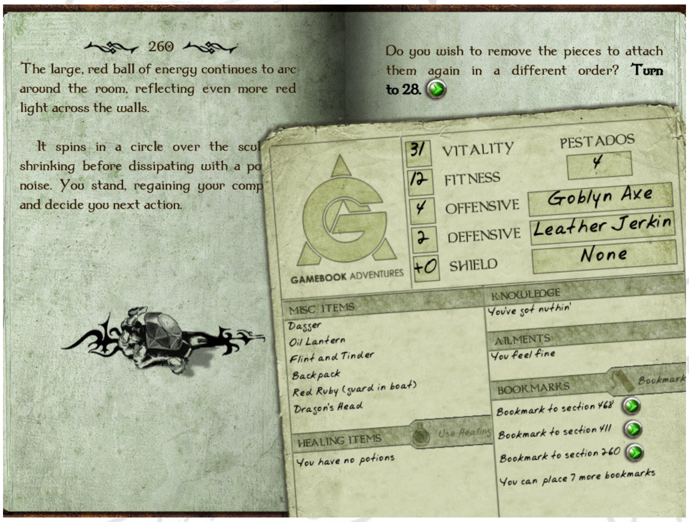
The author has posted a description of the 'hidden choices' mechanic used in this gamebook (posted originally on the Gamebooks Yahoo list over at groups.yahoo.com/group/

gamebooks):

> *With this mechanic, I am attempting to make a gamebook more like a traditional "adventure" game that people could play on their computer. For example, old games like* Secret of Monkey Island, *the* Kings Quest *series etc.*
>
> *The main thing I am talking about here is where the player would collect items of equipment which would be needed to solve puzzles later on in the adventure in order to progress. The player, however, would not be told when item "X" was needed, or more significantly, what item was "needed"; they had to work it out for themselves."*



Visit choicesgamebooks.webs.com for more info on this series.



260

The large, red ball of energy continues to arc around the room, reflecting even more red light across the walls.

It spins in a circle over the scul shrinking before dissipating with a po noise. You stand, regaining your comp and decide you next action.

Do you wish to remove the pieces to attach them again in a different order? **Turn to 28.**

31 VITALITY
12 FITNESS
4 OFFENSIVE
2 DEFENSIVE
+0 SHIELD

PESTADOS
4
Goblyn Axe
Leather Jerkin
None

MISC. ITEMS
Dagger
Oil Lantern
Flint and Tinder
Backpack
Red Ruby (guard in boat)
Dragon's Head

HEALING ITEMS
Use Healing
You have no potions

KNOWLEDGE
You've got nuthin'

AILMENTS
You feel fine

BOOKMARKS
Bookmark
Bookmark to section 468
Bookmark to section 411
Bookmark to section 260
You can place 7 more bookmarks

Other 2011 releases

The *Master your Destiny* gamebook series, based on the *Beast Quest* fantasy children's books, will release its second title in April. *The Dagger of Doom* will sell for 4.95 GBP. See www.beastquest.co.uk for info.

Tracey West brings us a new series of pick-a-paths based on the animated series *Batman: the Brave and the Bold*: *Trapped in Time* and *Trio of Terror*. This author has also brought us the fifth Club Penguin *Pick your Path* book, *Dancing with Cadence*. All titles are now available for 3.99 each.

Two new titles in the *Twisted Journeys* interactive graphic novel series, *Detective Frankenstein* and *Horror in Space*, are now available. In paperback format, each one retails for 7.95 USD.

The *Interactive History Adventures* series continues its run with *The Great Depression*, *Orphan Trains*, *Colonial America* and *The Salem Witch Trials*. Each of these books is already available and retails for 6.95 USD.

The *I, Hero* series has moved its planned releases from June to September. *Alien Raid* and *Castle of Doom* should be available by then (we hope) for 4.99 GBP each.

Four books from the *Famous Five Adventure Game Books* series are slated for release this year. *Unlock the Mystery* and *Escape from Underground* should be available in April, and books 5 and 6 (titles not specified yet) have been announced for August. Each one will go for 4.99 GBP.

There is also a new book titled *Where Should I Go?* By Jeanne Emard. Priced at 18.47 USD, it is available at www.lulu.com. The description does not say much about the contents but the book is apparently a graphic novel.

Greywood Publishing has a new zombie gamebook in the works, titled *Flight from the Dead!* Not many details about it are available at this time.

Gamebook Adventures for iPhone

In the interim between *Fighting Fantazine* issues, Tinman Games has released a new fantasy gamebook for iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad: *Revenant Rising* by Kieran Coghlan, as well as updating their previous offerings for the iPad. The enthusiastic crew have also announced two new fantasy gamebooks for the same platform: *Catacombs of the Undercity* and *The Wizard from Tarnath Tor*. The books, whose price is currently 4.99 USD each, should be available in March and April, respectively. Visit tinmangames.co.au to buy.

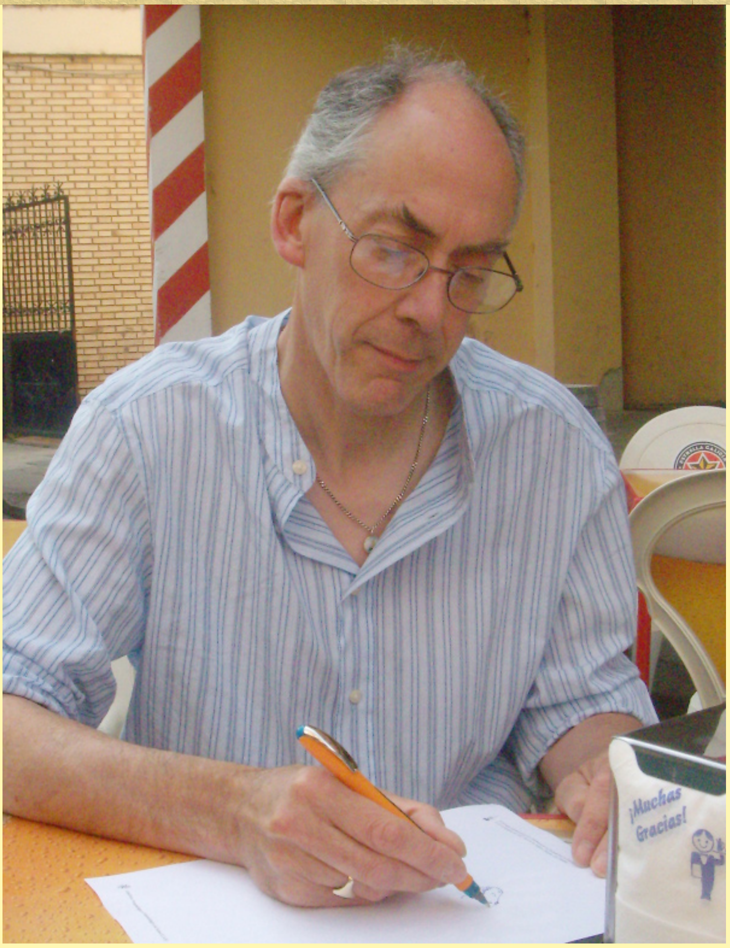
Another developer of gamebooks for the iPod and Android which you should be checking out is www.choiceofgames.com. Their gamebooks allow you to play a vampire, a dragon or a naval commander, among other options. The mobile versions are available for 1.99 USD.

Spank the Kindle

Gamebooks are slowly but surely working their way into the Kindle platform. One recent instalment is *Master of the Manor* (a *Spanking Adventures Gamebook*), which can be downloaded to the Kindle for 5.00 USD from www.amazon.com. The blurb reads:

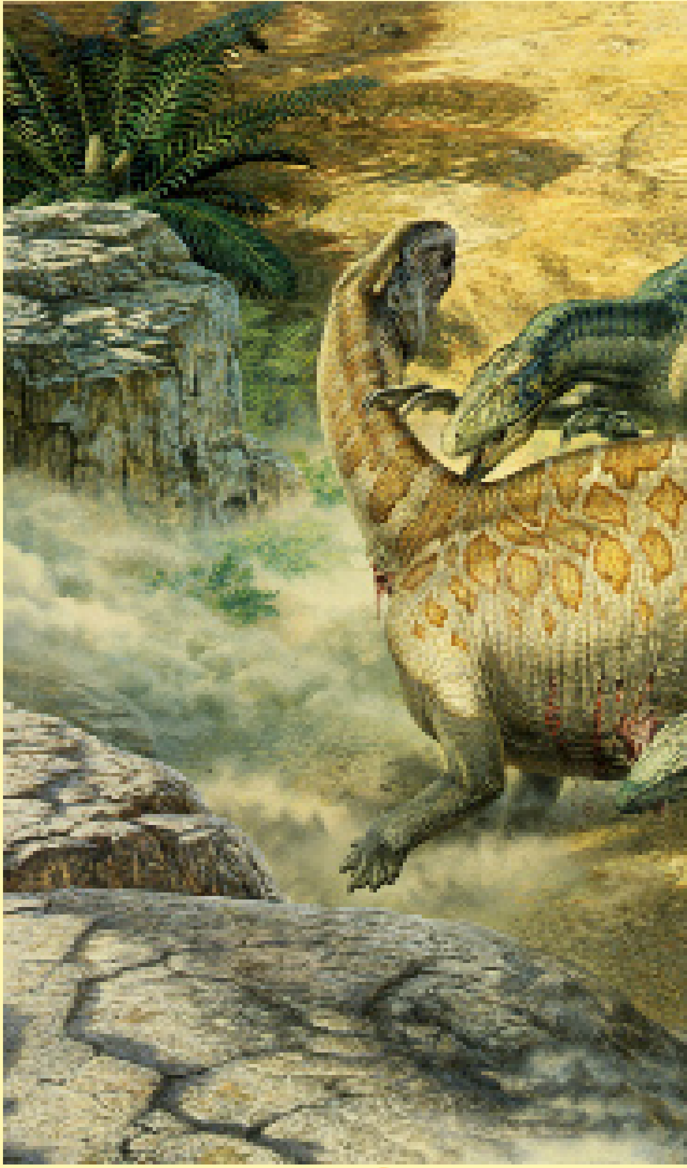
> *YOU are a slave girl, one of hundreds, serving at the whim of an all powerful master and his cadre of strict mistresses in a secluded manor far from civilization. Your task is not to escape, but to become the Master's favourite through deception, submission and cunning. YOU create your slave girl. YOU make all the choices. But beware – every slave girl in the manor seeks the same ends, and the mistresses deal with insubordination harshly!*
>
> *In this spanking gamebook you can:*
> *Create your own slave girl character, be beautiful, submissive, dominant, graceful – whatever you desire.*
> *Seek to evade, or even encourage, punishment on your defenceless behind.*
> *Choose to submit, dominate, thrash or be thrashed – the choice is yours.*

A reader has complained that page numbers are impossible to locate on the Kindle, making this book impossible to read, so buy with caution.



¡Muchas Gracias!

John Sibbick ***is now better known for his numerous works of art dealing with recreating the world, lives and times of the dinosaurs, but for many*** **Fighting Fantasy** ***fans his calling card is the art for books like*** **Midnight Rogue** ***and*** **Dungeoneer. Fighting Fantazine** ***is lucky he is able to squeeze an interview into his busy schedule.***



Above: "The large dinosaur victim is a Tenontosaurus attacked by a Deinonychus pack. The latter were one of the earliest examples of meat eating dinosaur hunters with the specialised eviscerating foot - the large inner toe hinges right back. This was one of four paintings for the then-new dinosaur gallery at the Natural History Museum in London around 1992. A book followed a year later. The paintings were 25" wide x 12.75" high, and they were reproduced at approximately 6ft wide. Now if I were doing this again I would probably be expected to add feathers to the Deinonychus."

Art & Photo: © John Sibbcik, 2010. Used with permission. Visit Johnsibbick.com/

DUNGEONS &

FIGHTING FANTAZINE CATCHS UP WITH **JOHN SIBBICK** AND FINDS OUT WHAT IS NEXT FOR THE ARTIST

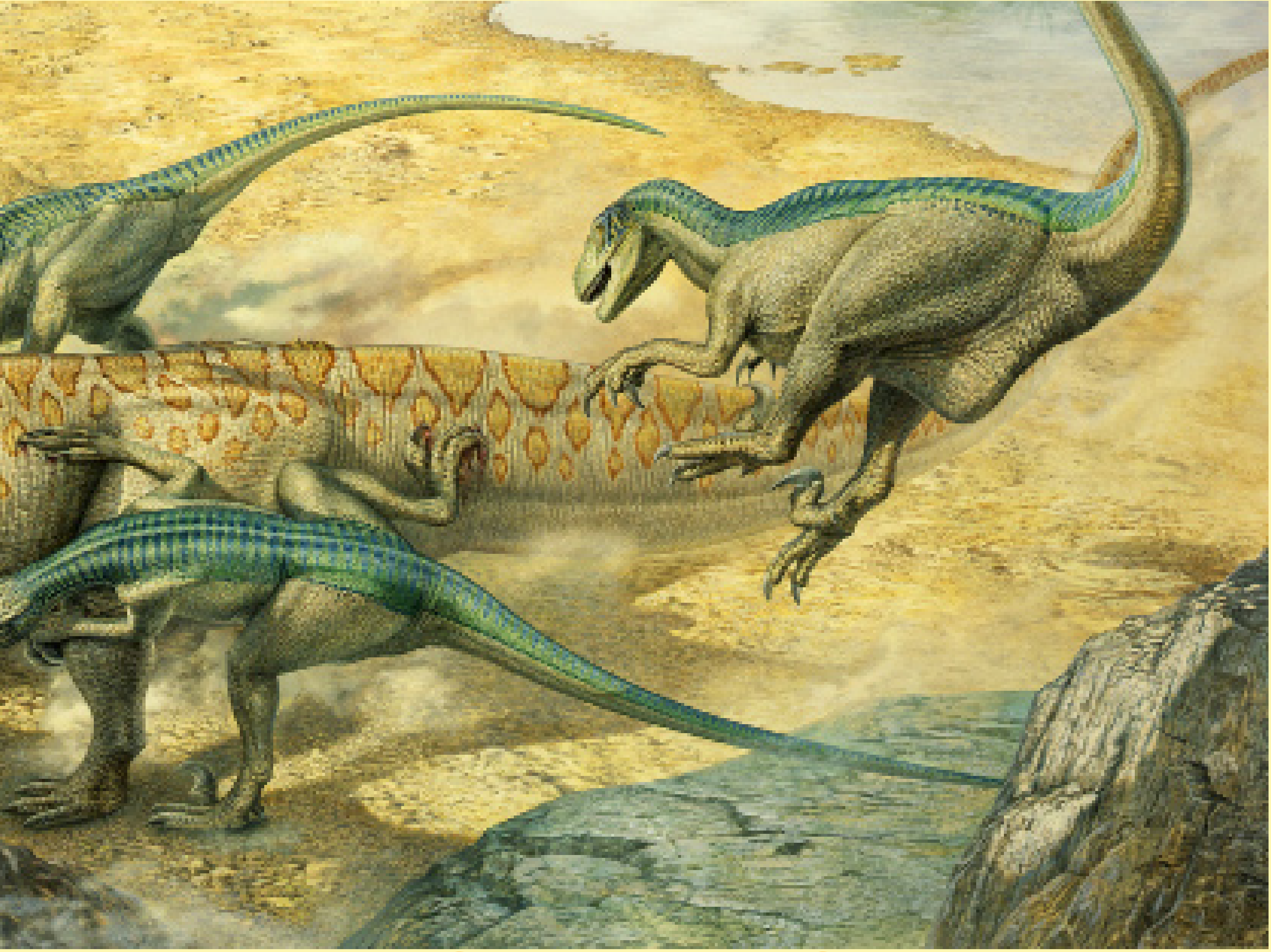
IN THE BEGINNING

What is your family background?

Working class I suppose – brought up in a terrace house with both parents working. My sister and I were expected to work at a career locally in "a job for life". I was expected to get a job in a drawing office for something like the electricity board as I had draughtsman skills. But I had other ideas and got on the train to London... In the end my parents were very supportive, if a little worried for my future as my income promised to be a little erratic.

What hobbies keep your interest outside art?

Mostly related to work – for my reconstruction work I make models to help produce more interesting compositions – usually in plasticine. Also photography for creating a reference library of pictures. I like to walk the dog as I get my best ideas when my brain is on "automatic". We have a large garden which takes a lot of time, and I also like looking at fossils – dinosaur tracks – some in the UK and recently in the USA. A lot of my work involves research which I enjoy so I don't have a lot of "spare time".



DINOSAURS

What first attracted you to art?

Originally it was illustration – I collected a lot of books and comics and it was the quality of drawing – the artwork in the *Eagle* comic for instance was very superior – especially Frank Hampson's *Dan Dare*. I didn't go to galleries too much then – more, outings to the Natural History Museum in London to see the murals and reconstructions.

Do you have a particular favourite artist?

I discovered the Impressionists in my teens and liked Bonnard and Vuillard. I also was drawn to Andrew Wyeth in the US – but he is more illustrative in approach. While at school I was given a book of Leonardo's drawings – the anatomic stuff with the cut-away organs. I was doing a lot of drawing at the time and was looking around for inspiration, and this impressed me.

Any inspirational fantasy artists?

I like Robert Crumb's work, Brian Bolland's amazing *Killing Joke* Batman comic style. *Little Nemo in Slumberland* drawn by Winsor McCay, which is really a spaced out epic... and William Stout in the USA. Also not quite fantasy, but I really rate the *Rip Kirby* comic strips drawn by Alec Raymond in the Fifties.

When did you realise you wanted to making a living from art?

I went in for drawing classes at school and took part in the Royal Drawing Society exams – and did well. I also had life drawing lessons on Saturdays with an amazing tutor – Mr Gee, before I went to art school. He taught me to look and observe and draw accurately. I knew then that this could be a career to aim for – I just needed the O levels to get into college.

You worked for some design studios before going freelance. What sort of work were you producing at these?

After college I had no luck with illustration work as I had not worked out my painting technique at that stage. So I put some time in a few small studios in London – doing paste-up and visualizing – doing mock-ups for magazines and designing Pink Stamp flyers. This was great for working to deadlines. Later on I was given small illustrations to do and eventually worked for a company producing children's encyclopedias and experienced a variety of work – maps, natural history, history etc. and generally I learned the ropes at this studio.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

FIGHTING FANTASY

Allansia (1994)	Cover art
Shadowmaster (1992)	Cover art
The Fighting Fantasy Poster Book (1990)	Interior art*
Blacksand! (1990)	Cover art
Dungeoneer (1989)	Cover/interior art
Midnight Rogue (1987)	Cover/interior art
Crypt of the Sorcerer (1987)	Interior art
Masks of Mayhem (1986)	Cover art
Titan – The Fighting Fantasy World (1986)	Interior art**

* = reprinted material
** = along with several other illustrators

GAMES WORKSHOP

Advanced Heroquest (1989)	Box cover art
Warhammer Stories – Ignorant Armies (1989)	Interior art
Warhammer Stories – Wolf Riders (1989)	Interior art
Warhammer – Realm of Chaos (1988)	Cover art
Citadel Miniatures Dragon Box Sets #1~3 (1987)	Box set cover art
White Dwarf #95 (1987)	Cover art*
Warhammer 40,000 – Rogue Trader (1987)	Cover art
White Dwarf #93 (1987)	Cover art*
Warhammer Fantasy Battle (1987)	Cover art
White Dwarf #90 (1987)	Cover art**
White Dwarf #82 (1986)	Cover art*
Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (1986)	Cover art

* = reprinted material
** = this picture of the eponymous "White Dwarf" was used alongside the logo from issue #102 (1988) through to issue #190 (1995)

ALBUM COVERS
Armagathus (2010)
Black Dahlia Murders (2008)
Bolt Thrower – Realm of Chaos (1989)

MYTHOLOGY BOOKS

World Mythology Series

(Celtic) Druids Gods & Heroes (1983)	Interior mono art
(Roman) Heroes Gods & Emperors (1983)	Cover/ interior colour art
(Egyptian) Gods & Pharaohs (1982)	Interior mono art
(South American Indian) Warriors Gods & Heroes (1983)	Cover/interior art
(North American Indian) Spirits, Heroes & Hunters (1981)	Cover/interior art

Time Life Enchanted World

The Lore of Love (1987)	Spot interior art
Tales of Terror (1987)	Spot interior art
The Secret Arts (1987)	Spot interior art
Book of Beginnings (1986)	Cover/ Spot interior art

FORTEAN TIMES

Lizard Queen (1999)	Cover art
Goatsucker (1996)	Cover/ Spot interior art
Dinosaurs Alive! (1996)	Cover art

What prompted the decision to go freelance?
I got bored with commuting into London and I really was freelancing anyway "on paper". It was costing a fortune commuting so I worked from home and started getting a wider variety of work offers – London was also getting bombed at the time by the IRA!

FIRST BRUSHES WITH TITAN –
MASKS OF MAYHEM AND
TITAN – THE FIGHTING FANTASY WORLD

Is fantasy an interest of yours and what do you make of the *Fighting Fantasy* range as a whole?
The first books I ever read were fantasy and Sci-fi – H.G. Wells, Bram Stoker etc., and to be an illustrator you are always reconstructing other worlds all the time, in my case deep time, back and forward. The fun is to take other people with you, to experience it themselves. I've not seen too many other *Fighting Fantasy* titles but the best ones have a strong narrative with shadowy spaces – Iain McCaig has that ability in *Deathtrap Dungeon* for instance.

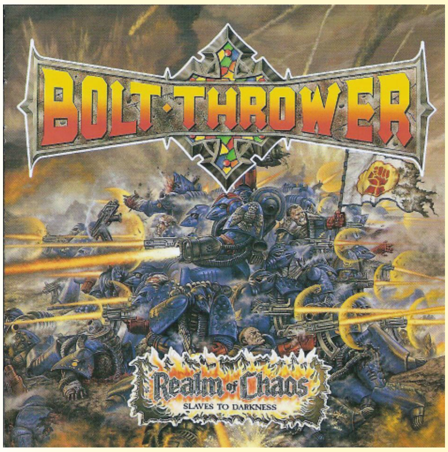
How did you end up working for *Fighting Fantasy*?
In the early Eighties I worked on a series of mythology books for a London publisher. I did dozens of line drawings and designs as well as cover and colour spreads over a three year period. These were slow but constant sellers and were noticed by Puffin Books producing the *Fighting Fantasy* series. They saw the depictions of magical beings, monsters etc and they commissioned me to do the *Masks of Mayhem* cover and drawings for *Titan – The Fighting Fantasy World*.

Was modesty a concern when depicting the Golem for *Masks of Mayhem* (as I notice it has a stone skirt)?
I'm not sure about this one – I remember that they specified the helmet-like headgear with a fiery kabbalistic logo so I think I must have been given a Russ Nicholson drawing of it. I'm sure he was well underway with the interior work by then. I don't think I would have given him a kilt otherwise as I'm sure stone monsters don't have "naughty" bits.

Look back at your first piece of *Fighting Fantasy* art, the *Masks of Mayhem* cover, how do you feel about it now?
This cover shows a lack of confidence to me now – there is too much detail and it lacks flair. I was a little intimidated by the small size and logo clutter and I would now do less and change the lighting. The stone monster seems more comical than scary but it could have been worse I guess...

***Titan – The Fighting Fantasy World* is on a much larger scale when compared to the gamebooks with several artists involved. Were you ever in communication with the others working on the book or was it all unconnected efforts?**
I had no communciation with the other artists. I knew that some re-used from other *Fighting Fantasy* books would appear, so I knew some of the drawings, but I

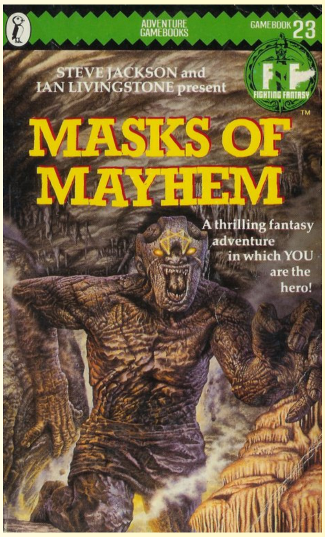
went my own way and was only given a few hints at how to "dress" the characters or their general appearance. That was what made the job fun. I worked in my own style, and they accepted all of them...


BOLT THROWER
Realm of Chaos
SLAVES TO DARKNESS

How well do you think the wide range of art styles presented in the book works?
I think the range of styles worked okay and the punter gets more for his money, rather like a sampler of *Fighting Fantasy* illustration. Some were darker in tone than others, some with a little bit of humour, but in general any inconsistency in "feel" over the various styles levels out.

Do you have a particular favorite picture from this book?
I like Iain McCaig's work and Russ Nicholson's crowd scenes (page 116) – both different in approach... For my drawings I liked drawing up the Elf child setting fire to the forest (page 101). His mad face worked out okay I think.

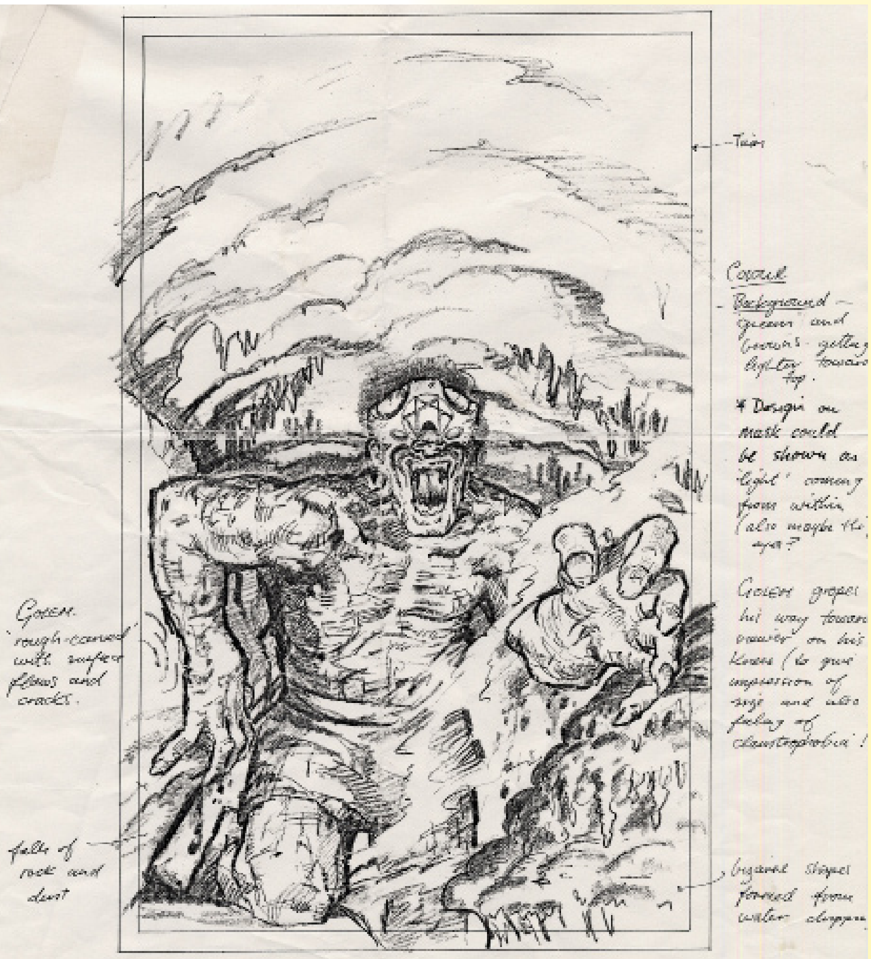
FANTASY LAND – GAMES WORKSHOP


ADVENTURE GAMEBOOKS
GAMEBOOK 23
STEVE JACKSON and IAN LIVINGSTONE present
FF FIGHTING FANTASY
MASKS OF MAYHEM
A thrilling fantasy adventure in which YOU are the hero!

At about the same time Games Workshop began offering you work too. Was this a result of the *Fighting Fantasy* work?
Looking through my diary at that time, I see that I had sent some sample sketches in to Puffin at about the same time as I completed artwork for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, so maybe I did show that to Puffin. The *Masks of Mayhem* cover followed after that artwork, so I think I was probably showing both clients the other work. I know that I showed Puffin and Games Workshop samples from the mythology series – colour and linework and they saw potential for their broader fantasy artwork.

Your CV notes designing a logo for *White Dwarf*. What was that about?
When I came into the Games Workshop machine around issue 80 of *White Dwarf* there was only a small line drawing for the logo and I was asked to illustrate a new one, which was based on a completed metal figure with all the elements and costume worked out. I only painted the new living character version knowing it would have to work as a small logo and a full size image for the magazine cover. They wanted me to add my illustrator's touch to work for both formats. I have a miniature model somewhere... painted up and mounted on a wooden base.

I really did appreciate the prominence of *White Dwarf* magazine. I visited the company a few times and it was obvious straight away that all the products and published output were taken very seriously...


Trim
Golem 'rough carved' with surface flaws and cracks.
falls of rock and dust
Colour
Background – greens and browns getting lighter towa top.
* Design on mask could be shown as 'light' coming from within (also maybe the eyes?
Golem gropes his way toward viewer on his knees (to give impression of size and also feeling of claustrophobia!
bizzarre shapes formed from water drippin

Top: John's cover art for *Warhammer 40,000 – Rogue Trader* (1987) as used on the cover of Bolt Thrower's album *Realm of Chaos* (1989).
Right: The preparatory sketch for the cover of *Masks of Mayhem* (1986).
John's handwritten notes read (left side then right): ****Golem 'rough carved' with surface flaws and cracks***
****falls of rock and dust***
****Colour Background greens and browns getting lighter toward top***
****Design on mask could be shown as 'light' coming from within (also maybe the eyes?)***
****Golem gropes his way toward viewer on his knees (to give impression of size and also feeling of claustrophobia!)***
****bizzarre shapes formed by water dripping***

OTHER ART

Animal Planet TV Feature

Dragon's World, A Fantasy Made Real (2004)	Dragon Design Consultant

SELECTED PALEO ART

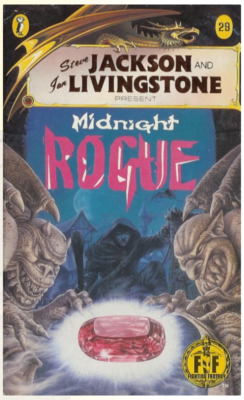
Evolution & Extinction of Dinosaurs (2005 & 2009)	Cover/interior art
Complete World of Human Evolution (2005)	Interior art
Dinobirds (2002)	Exhibition/book art
When Life Nearly Died [Permian extinction] (2000)	Interior art
Coral Reef Evolution (1999)	Interior art
Prehistoric Life (1994)	Cover/interior art
Natural History Museum (1992)	paintings for Dinosaur gallery, plus book: *NHM Book of Dinosaurs* (1993)
Dinosaur! (1991)	TV/cover/interior art
Encyclopedia of Pterosaurs (1991)	Cover/colour interior art
Dinosaurs - A Global View (1990)	Cover/spot interior art
Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs (1985)	Cover/interior art

Did you enjoy your work with Games Workshop and would you have piece you are most fond of?

Games Workshop had its own discipline in that all characters had to strictly follow the models down to the rivets in the sword belts, and most scenarios involved mad mutant crowd/battle scenes in fiery settings also based on their models. This restricted the creative juices a little – but once I got into the genre it was fun to work out how to come up with something fresh. My favourite painting was *Warhammer 40,000 – Rogue Trader* – The Space Marine's last stand based on the "Custer's Last Stand" paintings. I like the doom-ish background colours and the bleak terrain, and the idea that they are all going to die.

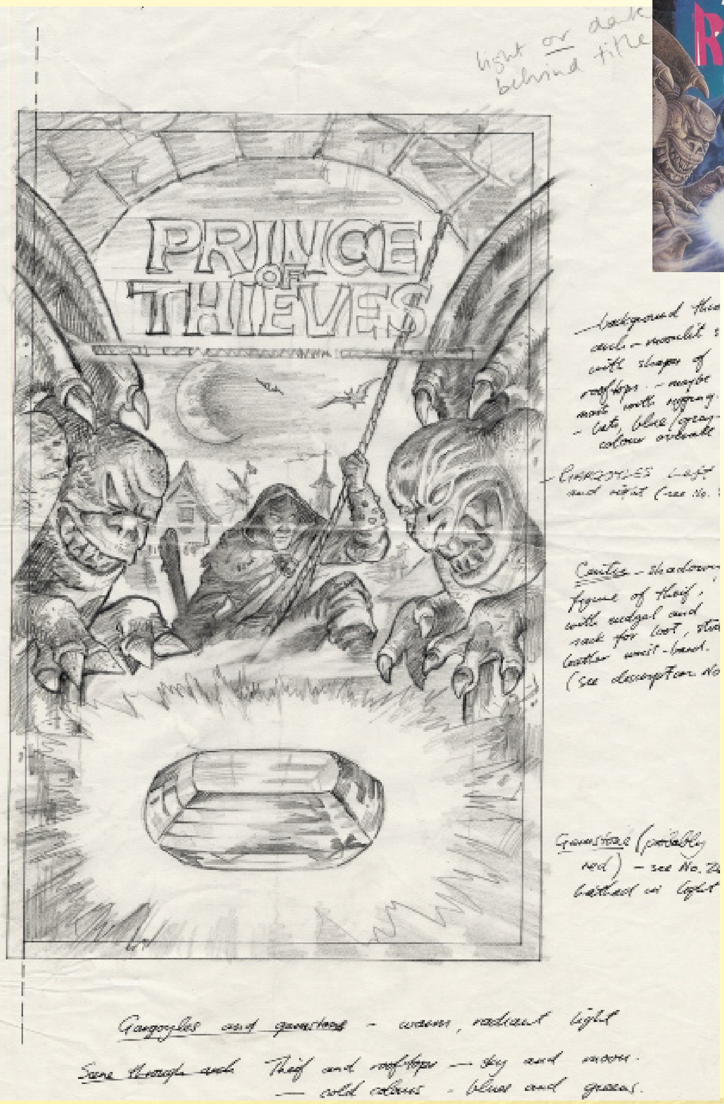
One of your covers for Games Workshop (*Warhammer 40,000 – Rogue Trader*) ended up as the cover of an album by death metal band Bolt Thrower. What was your reaction to that?

This Space Marine image was chosen for the Bolt Thrower band album cover. At the time it meant an extra fee and money was tight at the time. I wasn't into the music or lifestyle, but if it worked on the square format that was fine. The typography and graphics was overdone – too many logos and cheesy clutter overwhelm the artwork which is already busy enough. I had no idea what else was to be overlaying the picture but I think in general this was always the case – too much conflicting imagery.



After 1989 you cease the fantasy art beyond a couple more covers for *Fighting Fantasy*. Was that a deliberate move away from fantasy art?

I made no real decision to opt out of fantasy. With Games Workshop I tired a bit of the large crowd scenes and repetition of scenarios, which usually took me around 4~5 weeks to paint on average. I think with *Fighting Fantasy*, work dropped off a little and other museum work came in more often. Time and money come into the equation and something had to go. Working the way I do is time


light or dar
behind title
PRINCE OF THIEVES
Gargoyles and gemstone - warm, radiant light
Scene through arch Thief and rooftops – sky and moon.
— cold colours - blues and greens.

Left: The preparatory sketch for the cover of *Prince of Thieves* which became *Midnight Rogue* (1987). It is interesting to note that the first handwritten note (in pencil at top right) of *light or dark behind title* and the placement of the title text suggests at the point when John was working on this cover the new "Dragon" header had yet to be unveiled. The rest of John's handwritten notes read (right side then bottom): _*background through arch – moonlit sky with shapes of rooftops – maybe mast with rigging – bats, blue/grey colour overall_

*Gargoyles left and right

*Centre – shadowy figure of thief, with cudgel and sack for loot, studded leather wrist-band

*Gemstone (probably red) – bathed in light

*Gargoyles and gemstone – warm, radiant light

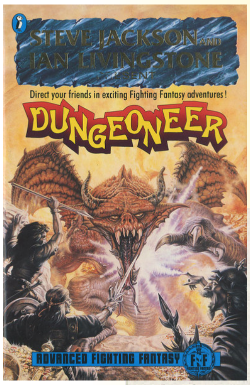
*Scene through arch Thief and rooftops – sky and moon – cold colours – blues and greens

consuming and sometimes I chose to work on shorter and quicker projects.

INTO THE INTERIOR – *CRYPT OF THE SORCERER, MIDNIGHT ROGUE* AND BEYOND

Were you asked to illustrate *Crypt of the Sorcerer* soon after *Titan – The Fighting Fantasy World* or was there a considerable gap in commissioning?

I was working on a lot of other stuff between *Titan* and *Crypt of the Sorcerer* – dinosaur illustrations for *Discover* magazine in the USA, a poster for Famine Relief hoardings through an ad agency, preparatory work for *Warhammer – Realm of Chaos*, Time Life books' *Tales of Terror*; and three paintings for Dragon box art for Games Workshop. A lot of different styles going on!


STEVE JACKSON and IAN LIVINGSTONE
Direct your friends in exciting Fighting Fantasy adventures!
DUNGEONEER
ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY
F:F

What sort of challenge was illustrating the interior of the book when compared to the cover?

Interior drawings were great, I loved doing them... You had to create characters, and in the case of *Dungeoneer*, draw them continously throughout the book, sometimes up to forty images, plus page spacers. For the *Midnight Rogue* drawings I found loads of reference for locks and keys and used them throughout. I tried to frame these drawings to work like a movie with different view-points to try and create a continuous atmosphere. In this way you don't get stale, especially as pen and ink can be quite tiring to do. Covers are totally different – the image hopefully should be dramatic and exciting and should make you want to buy the book!

What sort of feedback would Puffin give you about interior and cover illustrations?

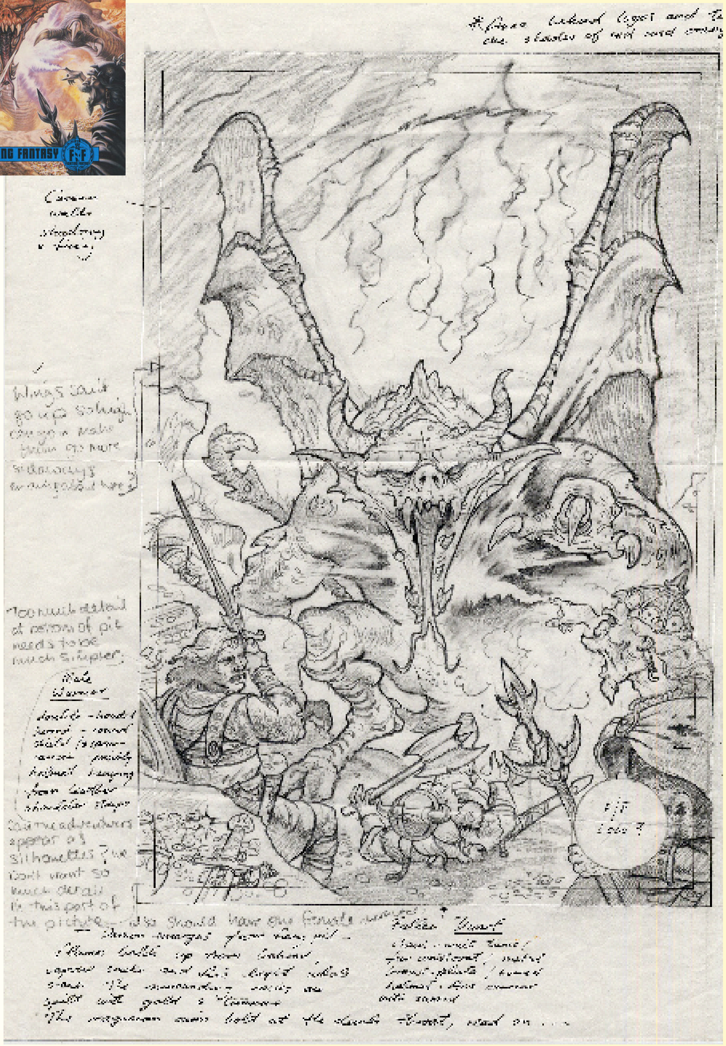
The brief for the covers was to indicate the contents or a character from a scene in the text and I would get feedback on any rough sketches I sent in for those. The interior full page drawings were usually inked in without roughing up in pencil first, unless I needed to clarify anything visually, which hardly ever happened. In a couple of cases I had to add or swap a character and in one case I had to cover up a bare breast on the barbarian girl riding the griffin in *Crypt of the Sorcerer* 179 – presumably for the US market! The repeated space filler images in the text, were discussed and usually specified and discussed in more detail.

***Crypt of the Sorcerer* features a Clay Golem (paragraph 299),**

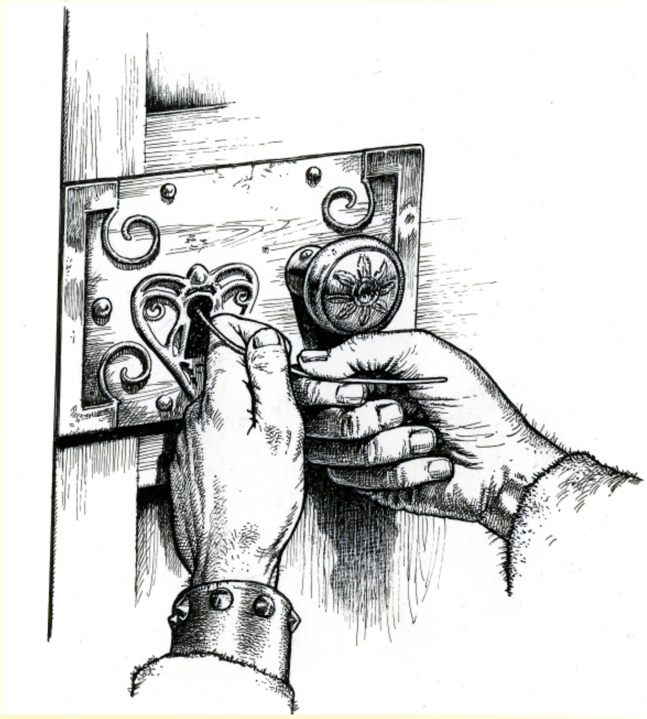
SELECTED PALEO ART CONTINUED

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ARTICLES

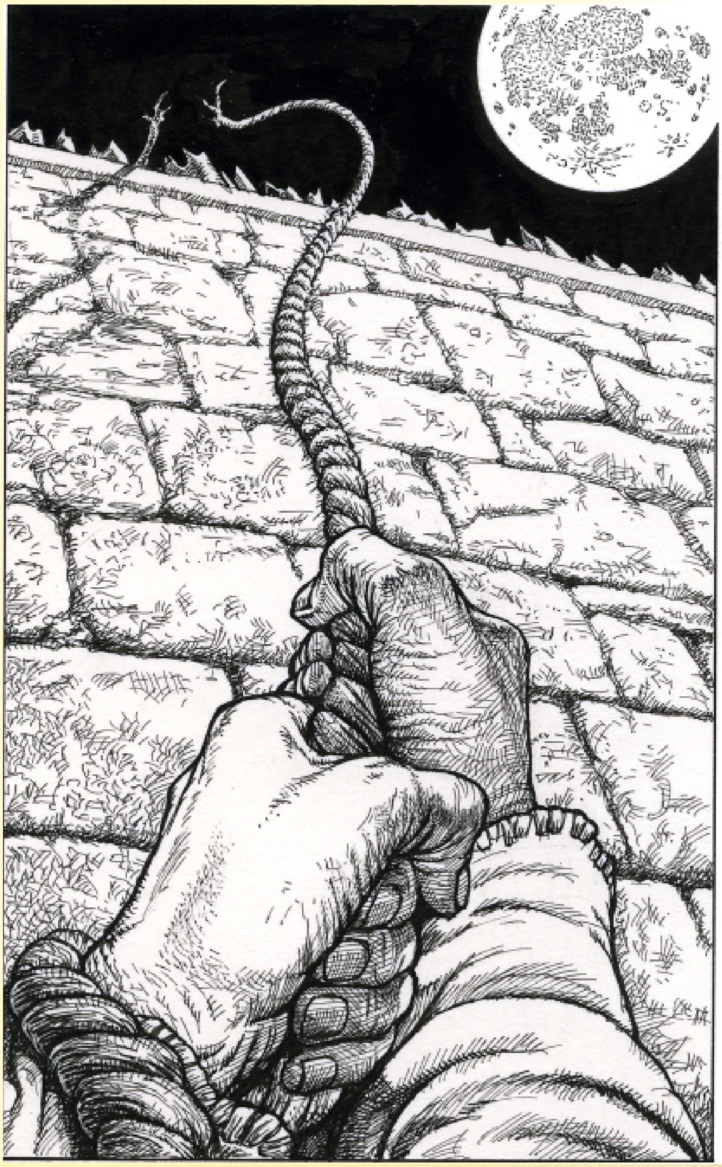
Flesh and Bone: A New Generation of Scientists Brings Dinosaurs Back to Life (2003)	Interior art
The Rise of Life on Earth: Pterosaurs, Lords of the Ancient Skies (2001)	Interior art
The Dawn of Humans: Expanding Worlds (1997)	Interior art
Dinosaurs of the Gobi: Unearthing a Fossil Trove (1996)	Interior art



Right: The preparatory sketch for the cover of *Dungeoneer* (1989). The handwritten notes read (top, then left side and then bottom):
Area behind logos and title are shades of red and orange
Cavern walls shadowy & firey
Wings can't go up so high. Can you make them go more sideways ending about here?
Too much detail at bottom of pic needs to be much simpler* [following arrow] *Can the adventurers appears as silhouettes? We don't want so much detail in this part of the picture
Male warrior* *double-handed sword – round shield/spear-carrier, possibly helmet, hanging from leather shoulder straps
Also should have one female character!
Demon emerges from firey pit – flames belch up from behind, vapur smoke and fire light whole scene. The surrounding rocks spilt with gold & treasure.
The magician aims bolt at the devil's throat, read on...
Fallen Dwarf chain-mail tunic/fur waistcoat/metal breast-plate/horned helmet. Axe carrier with sword



Above and below: Two examples of John's interior art from *Midnight Rogue* (1987).



akin to the creature you had depicted on the cover of *Masks of Mayhem*. Do you feel this attempt showed more confidence than the previous cover?
The ink drawing had to be the same character as the *Masks* cover – it was specified – and it was my first drawing in *Crypt of the Sorcerer*. It was not reproduced too well and appeared a little overinked – and I think I would draw it in more perspective now – looking up to add more weight. Compared to others in the book it lacks sublety, but you win some and lose some – I liked others better in this book – the Dragon attacking the balloon (paragraph 152) and the re-energised skeletons emerging from the graves (paragraph 139). The line was finer and more subtle I think.

Would you have liked the chance to do the cover art as well as the interiors?
I always preferred doing the whole package – cover and interiors – but only managed it twice due to time constraints. In most cases I think I had to do each drawing in around two days including the design.

Both *Crypt of the Sorcerer* and *Midnight Rogue* feature colour maps. Is that sort of this of interest to you and would you have liked to have had a chance to do one?
I would have liked to do the maps – I've done them in text books and *National Geographic* magazine as detailed artwork, so it would be fun to work them out and be able to spice them up a bit and embellish them with illustrative detail... This would be something I would enjoy doing.

When you did the cover for *Midnight Rogue*, the brief presumably came from the author Graeme Davis. Were you aware that the details depicted in the cover don't match the location or description of the gem at all?
My contact at Puffin was usually the art director – and sometimes the author – in all cases, I understood that the concept work was shown to the writer(s) after I had read their brief and produced drawings. So they had the final say in the way the imagery looked. Any inconsistencies could have been down to the fact that story detail was being changed as we went. In this case I don't recollect what came first – the interiors or the cover. It is usually the cover first. Normally these details would be checked before artwork started, but I do recollect sometimes being given ideas for internal drawings in fairly general terms, ie "two zombies chasing through a mine shaft with scimitars..."

Out of all your interior art for the *Fighting Fantasy* books, can you think of any briefs that were particularly tricky to execute in a manner you were happy with?
For me the problem with *Midnight Rogue* was how to make drawings interesting when quite a few had to be just room interiors – desks, wall-safes, locks etc with very little fantasy element... I also had to show the thief's arms as if they belonged to the reader, manipulating locks, climbing walls and burgling rooms. Hands are always difficult to make convicning so I had to concentrate on those details. I hope I conveyed a secret underworld atmosphere as well as involving the reader in the mystery by using various points of view. It is my favourite set of interior drawings of the three books.

If you had to pick one piece out of your *Fighting Fantasy* art to represent your contributions to the range, which would it be?

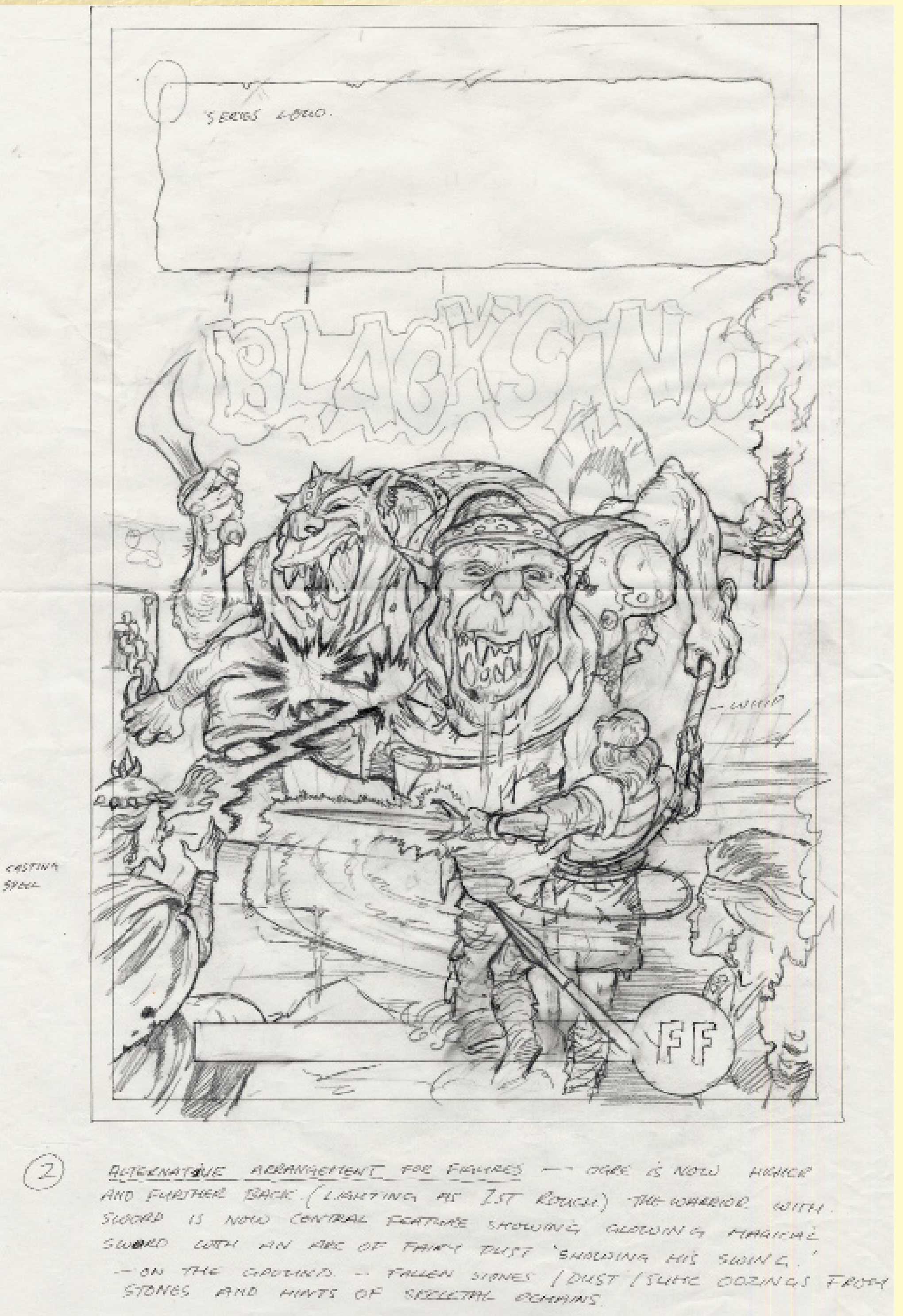
Dungeoneer still stands up okay I think, but the one cover illustration I use as a sample is *Shadowmaster*. This one is framed up and is included in my occasional one man shows – For a small painting it still shows detail, has an element of adventure, grotesque characters and some tension packed in a small space! It is probably too detailed for the size, but it was relatively problem-free to produce and seemed to paint itself.

You mention enjoying developing the same characters across the interior illustrations of *Dungeoneer*. Did you regret not being able to do the same for the two follow up books?
Creating a group of characters is much more satisfying than one off scenes... You need to know what they look like from all angles and how they would react in dramatic circumstances. As an illustrator it is a much more intense experience to keep the personalities consistent, so it helps if each have a specific skill or weapon to emphasise their differences.

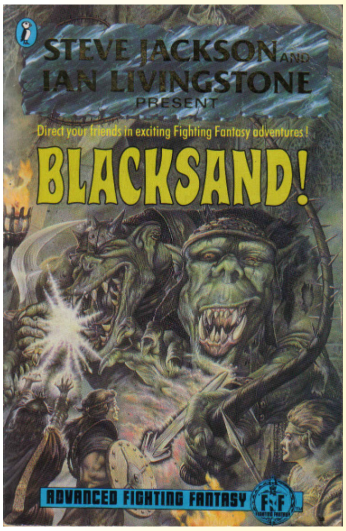
Midnight Rogue had the same kind of intensity, for different reasons as I mentioned before – I felt that I became a character while drawing the interior illustrations – which was fun... after all they were my hands I was drawing... *Crypt of the Sorceror* was a series of disconnected scenes which was fine – but less involving and quicker to do as I did not need to check on repeated detail and character.

The cover for *Blacksand!* appears to have undergone quite a bit of revision. On average, how many times did you need to create cover designs for the books and were there any difficult briefs?
Blacksand! went to three versions before the final... The detailed part of the image only gets about 60% of the available height, and with a similar scenario as *Dungeoneer* – with hero characters framing the bottom half, the two-headed ogre took a while to work out. I think this cover is less successful than the others – it lacks colour and seems cramped. I don`t like the blue marbled slab panel under the Jackson/Livingstone logo, and the setting gets lost.

I think all the first sketch ideas for the other covers went through first time, with minor character position changes. *Shadowmaster* should have been a problem because of the amount of stuff going on, but wasn't.



② ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENT FOR FIGURES — OGRE IS NOW HIGHER AND FURTHER BACK (LIGHTING AS 1ST ROUGH) THE WARRIOR WITH SWORD IS NOW CENTRAL FEATURE SHOWING GLOWING MAGICAL SWORD WITH AN ARC OF FAIRY DUST 'SHOWING HIS SWING.' — ON THE GROUND – FALLEN STONES / DUST / SLIME OOZINGS FROM STONES AND HINTS OF SKELETAL REMAINS


STEVE JACKSON AND
IAN LIVINGSTONE
PRESENT
Direct your friends in exciting Fighting Fantasy adventures!
BLACKSAND!
ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY
FF

Above: The preparatory sketch for the cover of *Blacksand!* (1990). The handwritten notes read (left then bottom):
Casting Spell
<u>Alternative arrangement for figures</u>
– Ogre is now higher and further back (lighting as 1st rough) The warrior with sword is now central feature showing glowing magical sword with an arc of fairy dust "showing his swing". – On the ground – fallen stones/dust/slime oozing from stones and hints of skeletal remains.

Blacksand! was a longer process but not a nightmare to sort out. In some cases the problem can be caused by other work interfering with your thought processes, or tireness. I can be preocupied by commissions months ahead, and random ideas pop up all the time whether I want them or not!

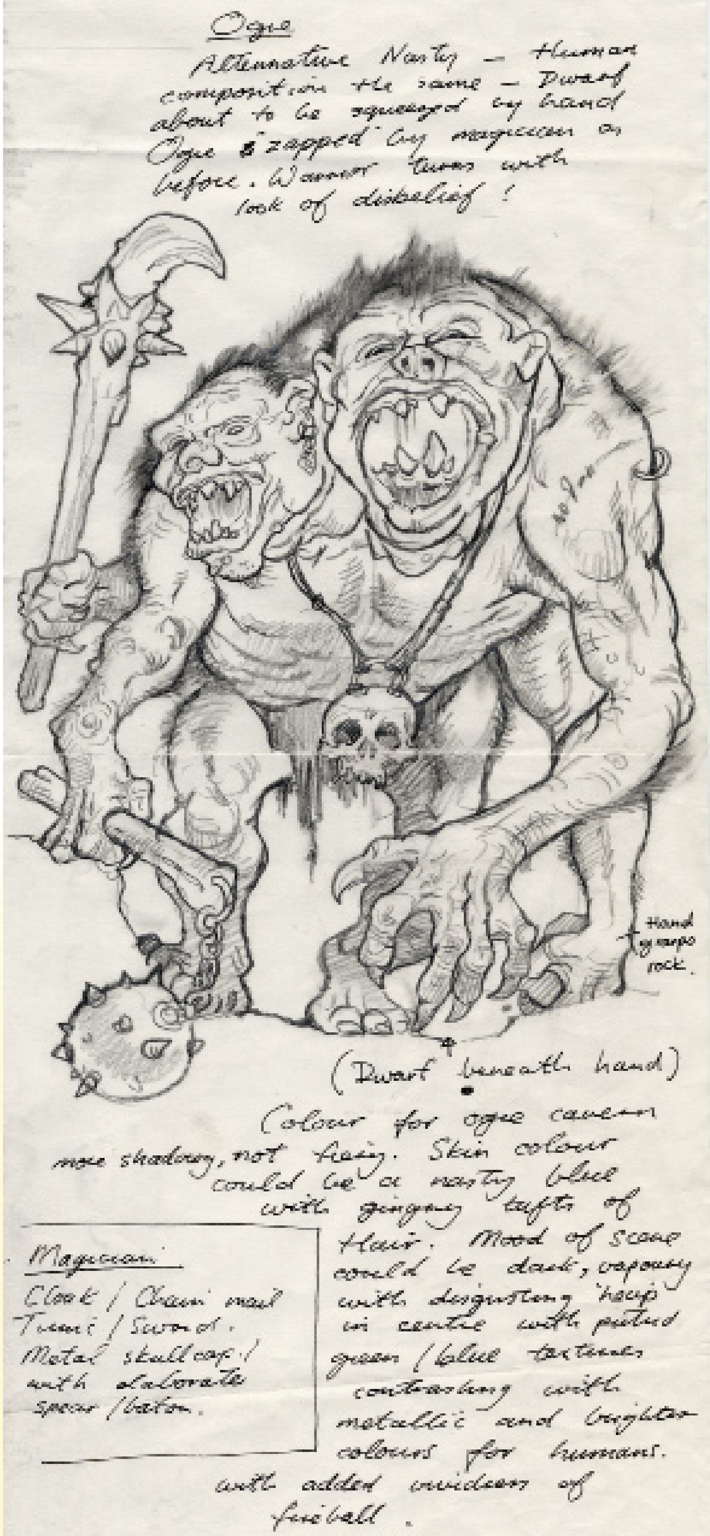
If you were offered the chance to illustrate a new *Fighting Fantasy* book, would you say "yes"?

I would if I had the time to do cover and interiors together – definitely!

ART IN GENERAL

Is there a favourite book that you would just love to be able to illustrate?

I have loads of prehistoric stuff I would like to do, but in fiction I would love to illustrate *The House on the Borderland* by William Hope Hodgson – A "trippy" cosmic journey taking in swine monsters and the end of the world. Some time ago I did a sketchy breakdown of it. I doubt it will ever happen now – too "old school" perhaps?


Ogre
Alternative Nasty – Human composition the same – Dwarf about to be squeezed by hand Ogre "zapped" by magician as before. Warrior turns with look of disbelief!
Hand gropes rock.
(Dwarf beneath hand)
Colour for ogre cavern more shadowy, not fiery. Skin colour could be a nasty blue with gingery tufts of hair. Mood of scene could be dark, vapoury with disgusting 'heap' in centre with putrid green/blue textures contrasting with metallic and brighter colours for humans. with added vividness of fireball.
Magician
Cloak / Chain mail Tunic / Sword. Metal skullcap / with elaborate spear / baton.

Left: An early sketch of the Ogre for the cover of *Blacksand!* providing an alternative take on the two-headed creature. The handwritten notes read (top to bottom):
****Alternative nasty – Human composition the same – Dwarf about to be squeezed by hand Ogre "zapped" by magician as before. Warrior turns with look of disbelief!***
****Hand gropes rock***
****(Dwarf beneath hand)***
****Colour for Ogre cavern more shadowy, not firey. Skin colour could be a nasty blue with gingery tufts of hair. Mood of scene could be dark, vapoury with disgusting "heap" in centre with putrid green/blue textures contrasting with metallic and brighter colours for humans. With added vividness of fireball.***
****Magician Cloak/Chain mail Tunic/sword Metal skullcap/with elaborate spear/baton***

Does your line of work engender fan mail at all?

I get some fanmail for *Fighting Fantasy* and a little for Games Workshop artwork – asking for details about selling pieces of work or about specific characters or paintings. They also ask advice about getting into the business of illustrating fantasy art. I always reply if the queries seem genuine. There is a definite nostalgia from quite young fans who seem to have all the books and models and need to contact an "ol timer" about the relatively early days.

What is you preferred way of producing an illustration?

First I do miniature sketches to get a general idea and then work up a full size pencil drawing with bleed and folds indicated. I paint in gouache (watercolour) and usually try to work same size if possible and perhaps adding a little extra area of colour to accomodate the various formats – bookcover, box art, album covers etc. I work on watercolour board which is fairly robust and in the early days this would survive sending illustrations through the post. For pen and ink work I use Rapidograph pens, .13 for detailed tone-dots and hatching and, and .18 for outlined areas.

Do you have a drawing schedule or habit?

I don't usually have the kind of luxury where I can choose when and what I can do, although I tend to prefer working on preparatory ideas during the day – morning preferably. During my time working on *Fighting Fantasy* it was a 12 hour day – from 9am to 9pm and I just worked through, especially when drawing the interior illustrations. Now I work fewer hours, as my eyes need more of a break and I put aside the time in the evenings for office work – catching up with emails, etc. In the past I was desperate to be busy and sometimes overdid the hours... now I'm more practical and older!

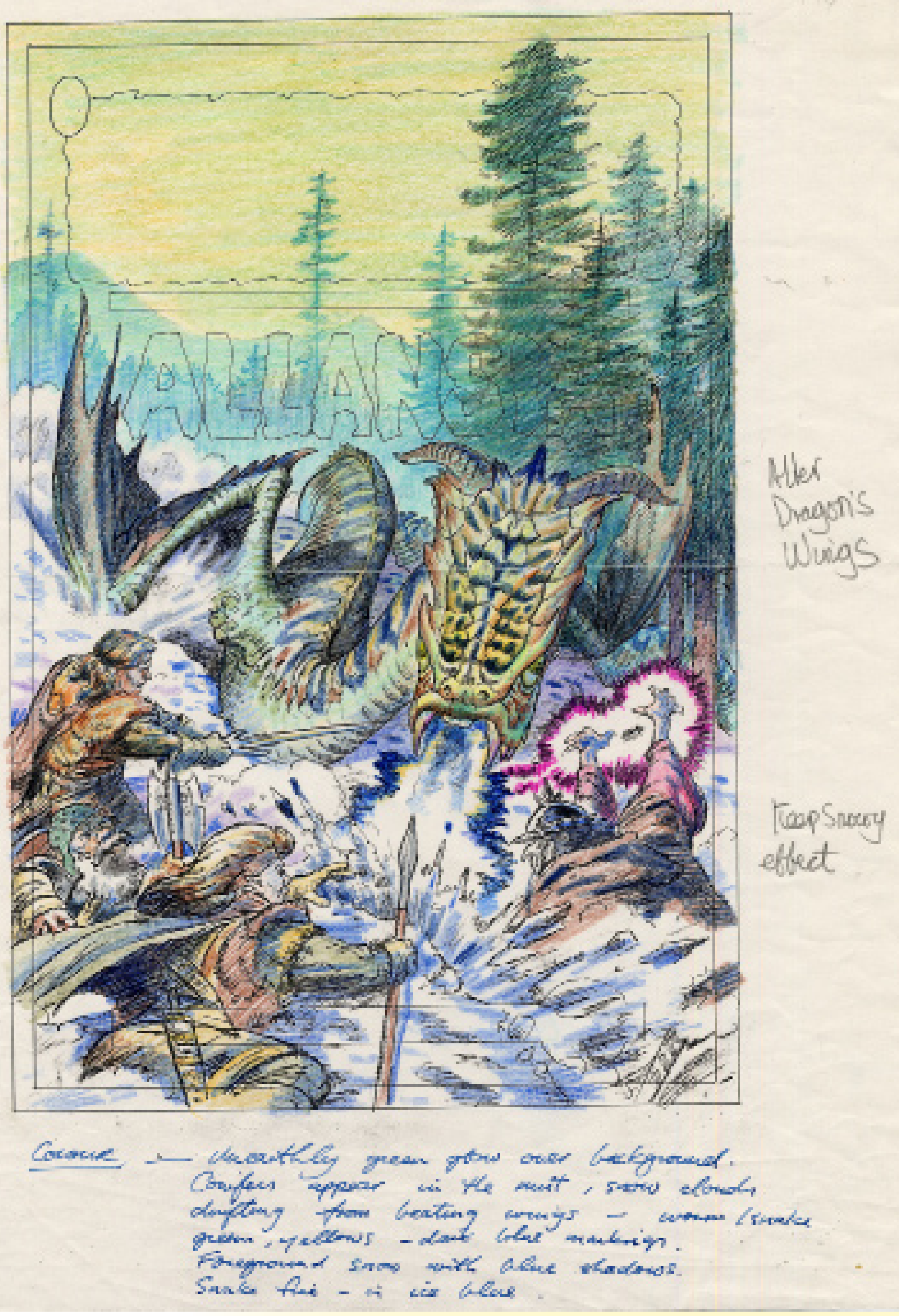
How long does a work of art take on average for you and

have there been some deadlines that have in the past looked impossible to meet?

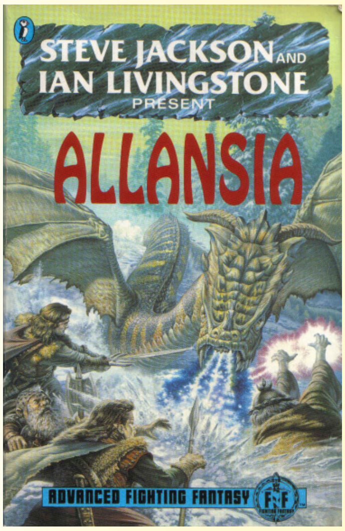
The dinosaur painting for example [on page 7] was around 6 weeks of painting time and maybe 10 days drawing and research. I had four of these paintings and many drawings to do before the gallery where they were to appear, would open. The *Fighting Fantasy* covers took around 10-14 days to paint with a few days for design. I think the *Shadowmaster* cover took about 3 weeks (6.5 day weeks) to do because of the density of characters. The artwork was only a little bigger than repro size. Deadlines nearly always seem too tight, sometimes unreasonably so, and in the past it drove my crazy and became quite stressful, but now I am more laid back... if the time does not fit I say so. If a job timing is unreasonable I don't do it. Life is too short etc... and sometimes the fees are not worth the pressure...

You are credited for the covers of two other albums. Were these specific commissions or simply the use of art you've done prior?

The second Bolt Thrower vinyl cover was commissioned by Earache records – another Space Marine war scene with all hell breaking loose. I re-designed the armour and bumped up the colour – a phosporous yellow effect. I never did see the printed version. The most recent vinyl cover was commissioned by the band itself. They had strong ideas on subject matter and it was an interesting experience to arrive at an image they liked. I also designed their stage logo for the band's tour. I have high hopes of seeing this one in print. Between these two albums I designed a T-shirt image for an American band – Black Dahlia Murders. They wanted a futuristic/medieval look with lots of fire and blood. I think they liked it, but I haven't seen it in print.


ALLANSIA
Alter Dragon's Wings
Keep Snowy effect
Colour – Unearthly green glow over background.
Conifers appear in the mist, snow clouds
drifting from beating wings – worm/snake
green, yellows – dark blue markings.
Foreground snow with blue shadows.
Snake fire – in ice blue

Above: The preparatory sketch for the cover of *Allansia* (1994). The handwritten notes read (right then bottom):


STEVE JACKSON AND
IAN LIVINGSTONE
PRESENT
ALLANSIA
ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY
FF

Alter Dragon's wings
Keep snowy effect
Unearthly green glow over background. Conifers appear in the mist, snow clouds drifting from beating wings – worm/snake greens, yellows – dark blue markings. Foreground snow with blue shadows. Snake fire – in ice blue

What sort of briefs were the Time Life books asking for?

This series of books were broken down into different themes per volume. The publishers wanted a real mix of styles and illustrators in each book and encouraged diversity in the illustrations. I worked on five different titles, taking one story in each book. Some were cute animal folk tales, others really dark and grim. There was very little art direction – rough sketches were supplied but I don't remember many being rejected. Some of my favourite artworks came out of these stories. I had a really good time and it was quite well paid. The job came from the client seeing my mythology books I had done earlier. Subjects covered were mass death by burning and flesh eating rats, love stories, a Finnish folktale, Russian animal stories...

Presumably your early paleo art led to that first *Fortean Times* cover. What was it like producing art for this maga-

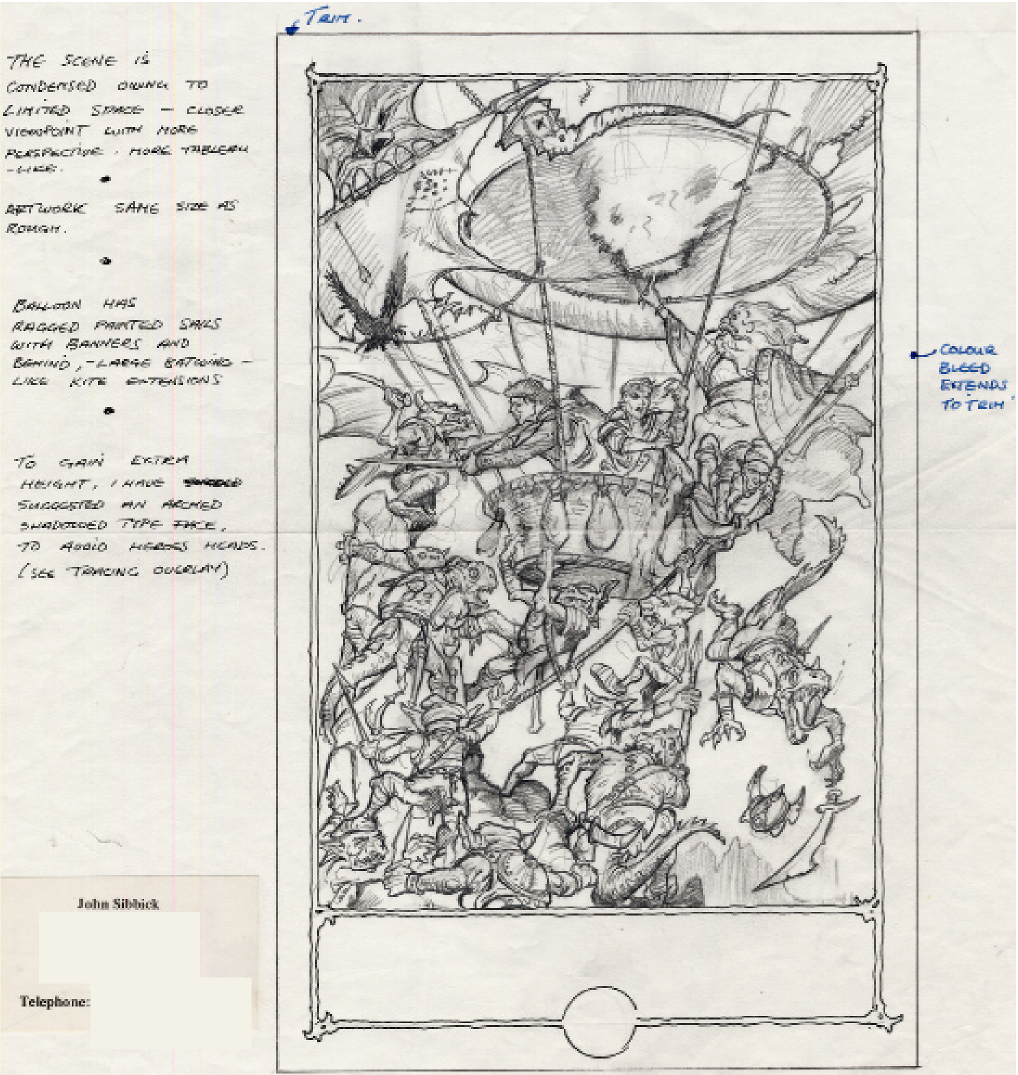
zine?

These were great to do – although the magazine content was based on reported phenomena, there was a tongue-in-cheek element to the artwork. I did a few interior drawings and three covers. Art direction was good as I had room to create image ideas from the specific subjects they required: the dinosaur out of the TV was the first, followed by the Goat Sucker – chupacabras – a demonic animal vampire reported from Costa Rica, followed by the Queen as part of a sub- lizard species. The publishers liked the fact that I had worked in natural history and fantasy, which fitted their "cryptozoic" animal stories. I would get a call to work on a Fortean Times story and in most cases I managed to come up with the goods on time...

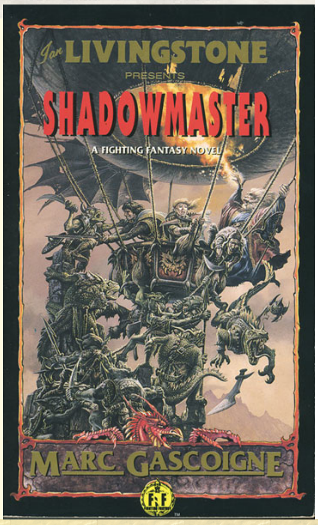
Have you ever undertaken private commissions? If so, what sort of things have you been asked to produce illustrations of?

I have a few private commissions – some are dinosaur scenes or various prehistoric subjects – I have three or four paintings in various stages of development at the moment. In the past I have worked on natural history paintings and a few paintings of country scenes. Also I sometimes get requests for whimsical stuff (see piping bear logo). If I fancy it I will take it on – I also sell artwork now and again but I keep a control over these.

THE TIME OF THE DINOSAURS — PALEO ART


TRIM.
THE SCENE IS CONDENSED OWING TO LIMITED SPACE – CLOSER VIEWPOINT WITH MORE PERSPECTIVE. MORE TABLEAU -LIKE.
ARTWORK SAME SIZE AS ROUGH.
BALLOON HAS RAGGED PAINTED SAILS WITH BANNERS AND BEHIND, -LARGE BATWING - LIKE KITE EXTENSIONS
TO GAIN EXTRA HEIGHT, I HAVE SUGGESTED AN ARCHED SHADOWED TYPE FACE, TO AVOID HEROES HEADS. (SEE TRACING OVERLAY)
COLOUR BLEED EXTENDS TO TRIM
John Sibbick
[redacted]
Telephone:
[redacted]

Above: The preparatory sketch for the cover of *Shadowmaster* (1992). The handwritten notes read (left then right):
The scene is condensed owing to limited space – closer viewpoint with more perspective – more tableau-like
Artwork same size as rough
Balloon has ragged painted sails with banners and behind – large batwing-like kite extensions
To gain extra height I have suggested an arched shadowed type face, to avoid hero heads (see tracing overlay)
Colour bleed extends to trim


Ian LIVINGSTONE
PRESENTS
SHADOWMASTER
A FIGHTING FANTASY NOVEL
MARC GASCOIGNE
FF

How did you end up doing your first piece of paleo art?

After working on encyclopedias, I was offered a lot of natural history book artwork. I took a lot of care over anatomy and detail in both animals and background, which led to me to a chance to take on a children's book on dinosaurs. From that job I had a more serious, adult dinosaur encyclopedia to work on. With two books in a row I became a dinosaur illustrator – or paleo-artist which sounds a little grander. I think paleo-art comes from working with a specialist or paleontologist where serious questions get asked and acted on, and so this encyclopedia became the first job in this category.

Since then you've done quite a bit in this area. What is the attraction for you?

The simple answer is that these extinct animals will never be seen in any other meaningful way. They are gone. Living animals are easily photographed and I wanted to work on subjects that no longer exist, and to reconstruct them and bring them to life. (The same applies to fantasy work only involving imagination and far less research!) I like the slow process of drawing and modelling based on the available anatomy indicated in the fossil. This could include trackways, bones and skin texture in some cases and possible hints at behaviour. The same with the environment-fossil plants, climate and landscape have all to be considered. Now of course digital art can be done more quickly and possibly slicker, and large book projects tend to go down that route. I now work for museums on smaller, more interesting projects involving other life forms as well as dinosaurs.

To date, what do you think is your

finest piece of paleo art and why?

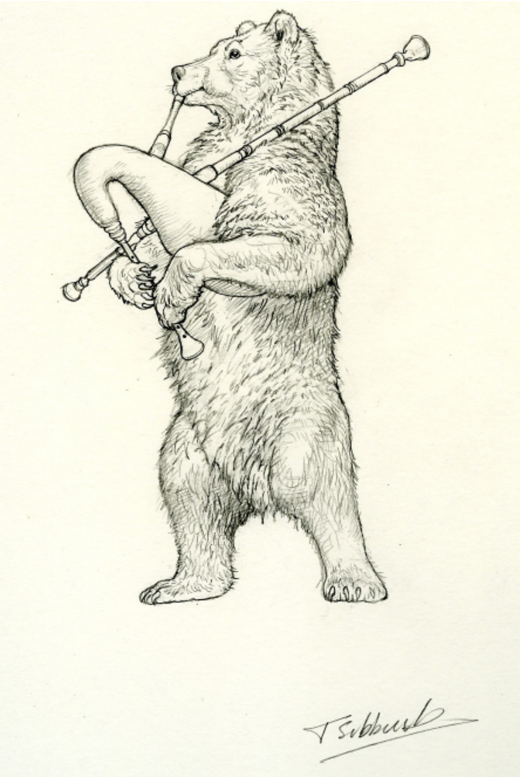
This is a really tricky question – sometimes my favourite work can be a small reconstruction that took a lot of time and effort, does not look like much and is not particularly impressive. It is just the satisfaction of problem solving. In some ways it is not my opinion that counts, and I'm not always the best judge. I am always surprised at what becomes popular with other people – stuff that I really dislike. In a lot of circumstances my work has to function with other objects – fossils or models in a museum situation... and may work best much enlarged to a couple of metres... many times the size of the original. I think my favourite stand alone paintings are an early cretaceous dinosaur scene during an aurora australis light show. The other is an Australopithecine group at Oldovai Gorge. These two works painted themselves and I watched it happen.

How different is producing art for an exhibition to that of a book? Which do you enjoy working on more?

I recently produced small detailed pen and ink drawings of fossils – quite dull on their own. These were reproduced on small panels explaining how monstrous marine animals met their end by highlighting fatal wounds from attacking predators. The panels were positioned next to dramatic life size models of the death struggle. The two elements of the exhibit complemented each other to make the point in a graphic 2D and 3D way. In an exhibition setting the illustrator has much less control of the finished space than on the pages of a book, where you work to a layout and know where it will be cropped and when to avoid detail getting lost in the centrefold or around photos. In both cases the artwork should work alongside other supporting material. I like both equally although books tend to reach a wider audience.

You've said that you do quite a bit of research for your paleo art and noted on one particular piece that the dinosaurs would now be expected to have feathers. Does the accepted appearance of dinosaurs change that often? Are you ever confronted with differing opinions of appearance when asked for a specific dinosaur? How do you choose what to go with?

For some time it has been known that some carnivorous dinosaurs have a skeleton that is very close to birds eg. Archeopteryx, the classic bird – dinosaur roadkill fossils from Germany. The first was discovered 130 years ago. Now with the recent amazing material from China emerging, this has now been confirmed for some other dinosaurs. The feathers are clearly visible in the fossil material. Some illustrators tend to feather-up all small to medium dinosaurs, whether the evidence is there or not. Every so often certain features come to light in the fossil record indicating that some dinosaurs had a frill down the back, or as recently, show a pattern or colour scheme... or perhaps a new angle to the neck in some giant dinosaurs. Scientific papers come out all the time time, advancing theories, and behaviour and some become mainstream and others get criticised into extinction. Each year more stuff gets published and more reading has to be done. Obviously scientists do not always agree with one another – so how I reconstruct something could depend on the client/scientist briefing me. Beforehand I check out the opinions of my client to see which way I should go on a reconstruction.



AND FINALLY THE FUTURE...

What future projects do you currently have on the go?

I have quite a few projects on the go at the moment. At present I am working on pen and ink drawings of the ocean floor at various locations after the great Permian/Triassic extinction... An era that kick-started the dinosaurs. This is a continuing series as various sites are discovered.

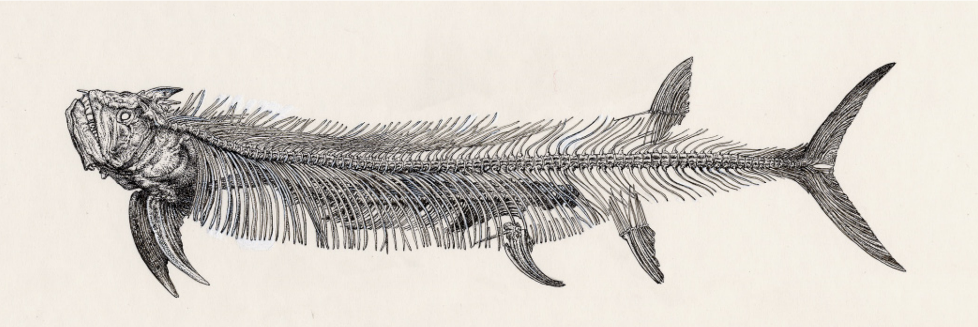
I'm also working on an unusual childrens book for a design company showing modern animals for a change. Also a dinosaur poetry book for children is being planned, with full colour illustrations.

I have various commissions of prehistoric paintings on the go for private clients: a marine seabed, and various dinosaur scenes, and perhaps another painting of an early man site in the UK to match the one I did a few months back, which was featured in the press and on tv.

In the spring next year, some line drawings for a dinosaur text book and I also have projects of my own to fit in around all this stuff... non-prehistoric ones. As you see no fantasy work planned in the near future, but I haven't ruled it out at all.

Fighting Fantazine *would again like to thank John Sibbick for taking the time to answer the questions put to him by the magazine. Meanwhile, readers can keep abreast of John's future printed art and browse a gallery of past art at his website:*
www.johnsibbick.com/

Above: A logo involving a piping bear design by John
Below: Pen and ink illustration of a fossil fish within a fish



BONES OF THE BANISHED

BY BRETT SCHOFIELD

RULES OF PLAY

To play this adventure you will need two dice, a pencil and an eraser. There is an *Adventure Sheet* on page 19, on which to record your scores. You are advised either to record your scores on the *Adventure Sheet* in pencil or to make photocopies of the sheet for use in future adventures.

Skill, Stamina, and Luck

Before embarking upon your quest, you need to know more about yourself. First you should determine your *Initial* SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores.

SKILL reflects your agility and general fighting expertise. Roll one die. Add 6 to this number and enter the total in the SKILL box on your *Adventure Sheet*.

STAMINA denotes your general health and fitness, your determination and your will to survive are all reflected in this score. Roll two dice. Add 12 to the total rolled and enter this total in the STAMINA box.

LUCK indicates how naturally lucky you are. Roll one die and add 6 to this number. Record your total LUCK score in the appropriate box on the *Adventure Sheet*.

Your SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores will be constantly changing during your adventure. You should keep an accurate record of these scores. However, you should never erase your *Initial* scores. As the adventure progresses, you may be awarded additional SKILL, STAMINA or LUCK points, but these may never exceed your *Initial* scores.

Fighting Battles

You will often find yourself reading paragraphs which instruct you to fight a creature of some sort. You should resolve the battle in the following way.

First record your opponents SKILL and STAMINA scores on a spare sheet of paper. The scores for each creature are given at the time of the actual encounter. The sequence of combat is then:

1. Roll two dice for the creature. Add its SKILL score. The total is the creature's Attack Strength.
2. Roll two dice for yourself and add your current SKILL score. This total is your Attack Strength.
3. If your Attack Strength is greater than that of your opponent, you have wounded it; go straight to Step 4. If the creature's Attack Strength is greater than yours, it has wounded you; go straight to Step 5. If both scores are the same, you have managed to avoid each other's blows – start the next Attack Round by going to Step 1.
4. You have wounded your opponent. Subtract 2 points from its STAMINA score. If you wish, you may use your LUCK here to do additional damage as described below. Go to Step 6.
5. Your opponent has wounded you. Subtract 2 points from your own STAMINA score. You may use LUCK at this point to minimize the damage.
6. Make the appropriate adjustments to either your opponent's or your own STAMINA score (and to your LUCK too, if you used it).
7. Begin the next Attack Round by going to Step 1.
8. This sequence continues until the STAMINA score of either you or your opponent has been reduced to zero, which means death.

Fighting More Than One Opponent

In certain situations you may face more than one opponent. Sometimes you will treat all opponents as a single monster; at other times you may have to fight each one in turn; and at other times you may have to fight them all at the same time! If they are treated as a singe opponent the combat is resolved normally. When you are instructed to fight your opponents one at a time, the combat is again resolved normally – except that once you defeat an enemy, the next one steps forwards to fight you!

When you find yourself under attack from more than one opponent at the same time, each adversary will make a separate attack on you during each Attack Round. You must decide which one you are attacking. Attack your chosen target as in a normal battle. Against any additional opponents you roll the dice for your Attack Strength in the usual way; if your Attack Strength is equal to or greater than your opponent's you will not inflict any damage; you have simply managed to avoid that enemy's attack. If your Attack Strength is lower than your opponent's, however, you will be wounded in the normal way.

Luck and Its Uses

At various times during your adventure, either in battles or when you find yourself in a situation in which you could be Lucky or Unlucky (you will be told when these apply), you may call on your LUCK for help to make the outcome more favourable. But beware! Using LUCK is a risky business and, if you are Unlucky, the results could be disastrous.

Testing Your Luck

Roll two dice. If the total is less than or equal to your current LUCK score, you have been Lucky and the result will go in your favour. If the number rolled is higher than your current LUCK score, you have been Unlucky, and you will be penalized.

Each time you *Test your Luck* you must deduct 1 point from your current LUCK score. Thus you will soon come to realize that, the more you rely on your LUCK, the more risky the procedure will become.

Using Luck in Battles

In combat you always have the option of using your LUCK either to inflict a more serious wound upon an opponent you have just hit, or to minimize the effects of a wound the creature has inflicted on you.

If you have just wounded the creature, you may *Test your Luck* as described above. If you are Lucky, you will have inflicted a severe wound and may deduct an extra 2 points from the creature's STAMINA score. However, if you are Unlucky, the wound was a mere graze and you do only 1 point of damage to the creature instead of the usual 2 points.

If the creature has just wounded you, you may *Test your Luck* to try to minimize the wound. If you are Lucky, you have managed to avoid taking the full brunt of the blow. Instead of having to deduct 2 points of damage from your STAMINA, you may deduct only 1 point. If you are Unlucky, though, you have been hit by a more serious blow. Subtract 1 extra point from your STAMINA.

Remember: you must subtract 1 point from your own LUCK-score every time you *Test your Luck*, no matter what the outcome.

Testing your Skill and Stamina

At various points during your adventure you will be asked to *Test your Skill*. This is done in the same fashion as *Testing your Luck*, but in this case you have to roll against your SKILL score. You do not subtract 1 from your SKILL score every time you *Test your Skill*.

You may also be called upon to *Test your Stamina*. Follow the same procedure as above, but roll three dice instead of two and roll against your STAMINA score. Again, you do not lose STAMINA each time you *Test your Stamina*.

BONES OF THE BANISHED ADVENTURE SHEET

SKILL **INITIAL SKILL =**	**STAMINA** **INITIAL STAMINA =**	**LUCK** **INITIAL LUCK =**	**DELAYS**	**CODEWORDS**

EQUIPMENT	**WEAPON:**
1	**6**
2	**7**
3	**8**
4	**9**
5	**10**

Restoring Skill, Stamina, and Luck

Skill

Your SKILL will not change very much during your adventure. Occasionally, a particular paragraph may give you instructions to increase or decrease your SKILL score. Your SKILL score can never exceed its *Initial* value – unless you are specifically instructed otherwise.

Stamina

Your STAMINA score will change frequently during your adventure as you combat deadly monsters and undertake strenuous tasks. As you near your goal, your STAMINA level may drop dangerously low and battles may become particularly risky, so be careful!

Your carry sack contains enough Provisions for five meals. You may rest and eat when the options allow, or at any time when you are not in immediate danger; you may eat only one meal at a time. Eating a meal restores 4 STAMINA points. Remember that you have a long way to go, so use your Provisions wisely.

Luck

Additions to your LUCK score may occasionally be awarded in the adventure after you have been particularly Lucky. As with SKILL and STAMINA, your LUCK score may never exceed its *Initial* value.

Equipment and Provisions

You are armed with a sharp flint-tipped Dagger. You are also equipped with a Rucksack that is stocked with enough Provisions for five meals. This sack is large enough to hold ten items *only* (each Provision counts as one item); if your sack is full and you wish to carry a new item you will have to leave something behind to make room. You will accumulate further belongings as your adventure continues; be sure to make a note of every item you collect on your *Adventure Sheet*.

Codewords

Along the way you will be asked to write down codewords on your *Adventure Sheet*. These codewords may not make much sense to you, but they are vital to tracking your activities throughout the adventure. Write them down in the box provided on your *Adventure Sheet*. Depending on your actions, you may also have to remove codewords.

Delays

In the second half of this adventure time becomes a crucial factor in the success of your quest. You will be presented with options that may slow you down or speed up your journey. When this happens you will be directed to add or subtract to your DELAYS score as necessary. The higher your DELAYS score, the more difficult it will be to overcome your final foe. You begin your adventure with a DELAYS score of 0.

Hints on Play

This adventure works like any other *Fighting Fantasy* adventure. As always, don't read the paragraphs consecutively (as they won't make much sense!) but instead follow the numbers as you are instructed.

Don't expect to get through to the end of the adventure the first time: it is both difficult and deadly, and will require several attempts.

BACKGROUND

Life is hard on the Plain of Bones, deep in the south-west of Allansia. For as long as anyone can remember, your people have dwelt in the village of Boneridge, battling both the elements and the gigantic beasts that stalk the plains. Despite only just having reached the age of adulthood, you are an experienced hunter and a vital member of the tribe. Each day you must venture out into the unforgiving wilderness to hunt down food for your people. Failure to return with a kill may mean starvation for the tribe. Despite the relentless conditions, the Boneridge tribe has managed to eke out an existence, bound together under the leadership and courage of your warrior-chieftain, Ngodo. It was therefore a devastating blow to your people when a tragic accident claimed his life. Three days ago Ngodo was out on a hunt with his fellow warriors, sitting astride his lifelong companion, the horned beast known as Longspike. The chieftain was tossed from his saddle by his once-faithful mount, tumbling over a cliff to his death. Longspike escaped into the wilderness, leaving the warriors to recover the broken body of their leader and return to the village.

Lost without a clear leader, your people turned to Valgrek, the village shaman, for guidance. The aged soothsayer retired to his tent to seek counsel with the spirits of your ancestors. For an entire day and night the village echoed with the unearthly chatter of the dead as Valgrek communed with the spirit world. Finally he emerged from his tent and declared to the gathered crowd that a new chieftain must be selected from among the tribesfolk. The ancient Rite of Banishment must be performed.

Gasps ripple through the crowd; the ancient rite has not been invoked for many generations. But since Ngodo died without leaving an heir, there can be no other way. All eligible adults, including you, gather your weapons and provisions and assemble at the edge of the village. Valgrek silences the crowd with a wave of his gnarled hand.

'Our beloved ancestors have spoken the truth – the Rite of Banishment must commence. Each of you has been tasked with proving yourself worthy of leading our people, but only one will succeed. Strength, bravery, and resilience – these are the virtues by which you will be judged. Go now into the wild and seek the mightiest trophy; be it horn, claw, eye or tail; and return within one moon. The one who returns with the greatest prize will be proven worthy. Until then, you are hereby exiled from the tribe!'

Turn to paragraph **1**.

1

The candidates begin to depart the village. Your duty is clear – venture out into the wilderness, track and kill the most fearsome creature you can find, and return with a trophy worthy of a chieftain. As the Plain of Bones is infamous for its colossal lizards and bloodthirsty monsters, finding such a beast should prove no problem!

Before you leave, you make a quick check of your belongings. Tucked into your belt is a flint-tipped Dagger. Your rucksack holds five Provisions, more than enough to last you the two days of banishment. Make a note of these items on your *Adventure Sheet*. You also have the choice of taking either a Rope or a Torch with you (but not both). The Rope will be useful should you do any climbing, and the Torch will be invaluable at night or in a cave.

A few warriors remain, still finalising their preparation. The women, children and the elderly have gathered a short distance away, tearfully waving off their partners, fathers and sons. If you do not wish to waste any time, you may set off immediately (turn to **175**). Alternatively you may choose speak to one of the following people:

Paru, your childhood friend	Turn to **66**.
Wanushu, the tribe's greatest hunter	Turn to **38**.
Ogmil, Valgrek's apprentice	Turn to **160**.
Kuwi, a close friend	Turn to **144**.

2

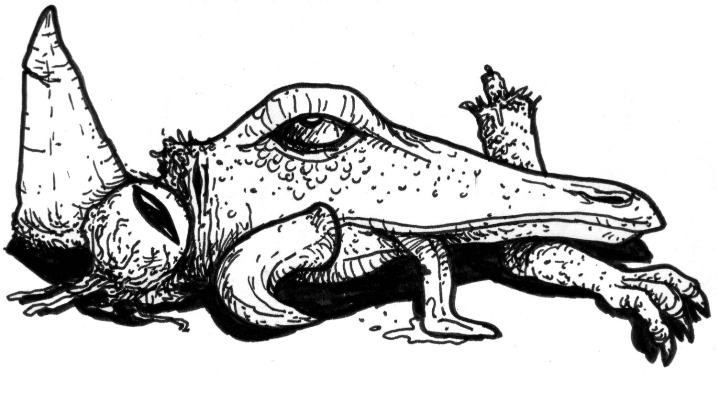
The pit is quite deep, and it will take a superhuman leap to get you out of it. Roll two dice and *Test your Skill* three times in succession. If you are successful all three times, you succeed in your attempt and escape from the pit; turn to **158**. If you fail any of the rolls you are unable to jump high enough and only tire yourself out (lose 2 STAMINA points). You will have to try and climb out; turn to **208**.

3

You scan your surroundings for the tallest tree you can find. It turns out to be a baobab, its fat trunk stretching into the evening sky before sprouting into a handful of squat branches. You nimbly clamber up the tree, pulling yourself into the top branches just as the sun vanishes over the horizon. You are greeted by a deep, savage growl – that of the BLACK LION that already calls the tree home! The deadly mix between a black panther and a lion pads towards you, teeth bared. It has just woken up, and it wants you for breakfast!

BLACK LION SKILL 8 STAMINA 11

Should the Black Lion ever roll a double number for its Attack Strength, it will knock you out of the tree and you will fall to your death.



If you defeat the great cat you may skin it for an impressive trophy (note the Black Lion Pelt on your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so) before settling down to a peaceful sleep. In the morning you must eat a meal (remove a Provision from your *Adventure Sheet*). If you cannot or will not, you will have to make do with the leaves and fruit you find on the tree; this will not fully satisfy your hunger, however, and you must lose 2 STAMINA points.

Once you have eaten you carefully descend the baobab tree and continue on your way. You decide to head west across the plains; turn to **226**.

4

The putrid corpse drops to the floor, lifeless once more. You open the physician's tomb and find a single glass vial, filled with a green liquid. You pick up the vial, coated with the dust of ages, and unstopper it. The acrid smell of the liquid inside stings your nostrils. If you wish to drink the liquid, turn to **84**. Otherwise there is nothing else of interest in the chamber, so you leave. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **243**.

5

You straighten your back and hold your arms out at your sides in an attempt to make yourself look as big as possible. The Terrorclaw is unperturbed; it casually inspects an insect crawling up a blade of grass. You are entertaining the idea of prodding it with your weapon when a second creature bursts out of the grass and smashes into your side. Your torso burns in agony as you are driven forcefully into the ground. Only then does the Terrorclaw take action, its goal of distracting you while its mate circled around and ambushed you from behind complete. As they rip you to shreds your last thoughts are of the inspired cunning of the creature. Clever girl...

6

The passage winds through the darkness, leading you deeper into the mountain. Eventually it opens out into a large, almost circular chamber. The uneven floor is riddled with tiny fissures and a jumble of rocks is piled near the centre of the chamber. If you wish to spend some time exploring the cave, turn to **58**. Otherwise you head to another tunnel on the far side; turn to **28**.

7

You leave the copse behind you and continue on your way. The rest of the journey is uneventful and soon the familiar site of Boneridge Village comes into sight. Turn to **48**.

8

In centuries past, the ancient tower would have stretched proudly into the sky. Now, however, its crumbling stone blocks are tilting dangerously to the south, bound together by little more than the choking vines that cover its surface.

You cannot find a doorway and so enter the tower through a window that is close to ground level. Inside you find the remains of a twisting stairwell that leads both upwards and downwards into darkness. Will you descend the stairs into the gloom (turn to **187**), or climb them to the top of the tower (turn to **45**)?

9

A couple of hours of hard trekking finds you wandering through some light woodland. The trees loom over the track, their branches lined with hard thorns that you must carefully pick your way through. *Test your Skill*; If you are successful, turn to **167**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **70**.

10

The passage continues on for a short way before coming to a dead end. Set into the walls of the passage are doorways, facing each other in pairs. Solid stone doors block most of the doorways, but the final ten are dark and empty. There are no handles in any of the doors, making the method of how to open them something of a mystery, but each is inscribed with a mysterious symbol.

If you are searching for a specific person, you will know the number associated with their name; turn to this paragraph now. If you do not know the number, or the paragraph you turn to makes no sense, you decide to investigate the empty doorways – turn to **246**.

11

You sprint away from the furious Boneridge as fast as your legs will take you. The roars of the enraged beast ring in your ears as it pursues you across the valley floor. Being supremely fit, you steadily pull away from the lumbering bull, but to no avail! The steep rock-face of the valley's northern end looms before you, cutting off your only avenue of escape. You turn back and face the charging beast. Will you brace yourself for the charge (turn to **69**), or are you crazy enough to try and leap over the creature (turn to **23**)?

12

You return to the cavern and walk back up the tunnel to the crossroads. Do you have the codeword *Elcatnet* written on your *Adventure Sheet*? If so, turn to **97**. Otherwise turn to **63**.

13

Udeme is taken aback by your offering (remove one of your Provisions from your Adventure Sheet). 'Thank you, my friend. I will make sure the elders know of your courage. Please take this.' Your fellow hunter removes a carved stone talisman from around his neck and presses it into your hands.

'I believe this charm gave me the strength to survive my imprisonment. I hope you will also benefit from its power.' With that, Udeme begins his journey home. Restore 1 LUCK point for your generosity and note the Charm of Endurance on your *Adventure Sheet*. Any time you have to *Test your Stamina* you may choose to draw upon the magic instilled in the charm and automatically succeed in the test. You may do this once and once only, after which the charm becomes useless. Now turn to **170**.

14

You scrabble desperately at the cliff's face for a handhold as the ground rushes up to meet you. Suddenly your hands find purchase on the lip of a ledge. Your downward momentum threatens to rip your arms out of their sockets, but you grit your teeth through the pain and retain your grip (lose 2 STAMINA points). Painfully you haul yourself up on to the ledge and begin the slow climb back to the top of the cliff; turn to **177**.

15

You topple over, instinctively throwing your arms out to halt your descent. Sharp rocks tear into your skin as the momentum of your fall catapults you head over heels. Explosions of pain wrack your body as you roll down the slope, bouncing from rock to rock – roll one die, add 1 to the result and lose that many STAMINA points. Eventually, mercifully, you are able to grab hold of a stony outcrop. Turn to **88**.

16

The humid heat of the surrounding jungle swiftly gives way to a chilling cold as you enter the gloomy opening. It is difficult to see anything in the darkness; if you still possess an unlit torch, you can choose to light it now (remember to remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*). If you cannot or choose not to light a torch, you must reduce your SKILL by 4 points until you return to daylight.

You descend a steep set of stairs that plunge into the earth for what feels like hundreds of metres. Eventually they terminate at a tunnel that continues along for a short distance before meeting a T-junction. Hanging on the wall in front of you is a large stone disc, carved with the image of crossed swords above a mythical winged serpent. Below this is a metal plate engraved with the following peculiar markings:

I – XXVI ◀ Knqxum cqn Trwpb xo Lnunwjbrj ▶ XXVII – LII

Both passages stretch away into darkness. Will you head left (turn to **232**) or right (turn to **10**)?

17

The trail winds through the grass, heading straight in one direction and then suddenly veering in another. It doesn't seem to have been made with any thought or goal in mind. After some twenty minutes, the trail comes to a dead end and you discover its maker. The huge bulk of a Threehorn lies in front of you, rotting in the afternoon sun. Most of the flesh has been stripped from its body, exposing a ribcage so large you could stand inside it. Empty eye sockets stare blankly at you from below two long horns and bony neck frill. A third, smaller horn pokes out from above its snout.

Feasting on the corpse of the Threehorn is a handful of Terrorclaws, savage bipedal predators armed with sharp teeth and sickle-like claws on their hind feet. As one, the creatures cease feeding and turn to stare at you. One of the Terrorclaws, larger than the others and covered in scars, emits a low, sinister hiss. You are well aware that these pack hunters are notoriously fast runners and that your chances of outrunning them are slim. But what other choice do you have? Will you run for your life (turn to **43**) or stand and fight (turn to **80**)?

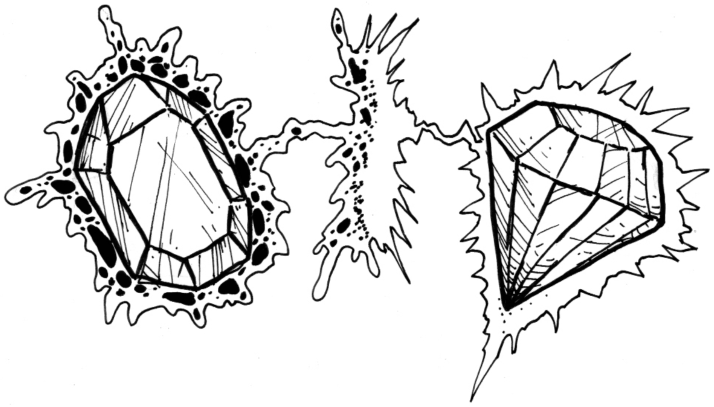
18

You spend a long time searching but eventually discover the entrance hidden beneath a rocky overhang. The dark opening appears unguarded, so you cautiously step inside. A pair of crude spears rests against the cave wall but the place appears unguarded. You creep further into the cave, every sense straining to its fullest, but cannot detect any signs of life. The cave branches off into two tunnels that head in opposite directions. Will you go left (turn to **51**) or right (turn to **138**)?

19

The floor of the tower is littered with the broken remnants of the steps that have crumbled away over the years. A row of exotic metal weapons lines the curved stone wall, hanging from metal hooks. An arched doorway leads to a small, dark cave. What will you do?

Examine the weapons?	Turn to **234**.
Explore the cave?	Turn to **91**.
Climb back up the staircase?	Turn to **34**.



20

You are standing in a wide, circular pit that has been gouged out of the hard rock of Oldbone Gorge by its primitive inhabitants. The ground is littered with bones of both men and beasts; shattered weapons lie amidst patches of rust-coloured stain. A large portcullis blocks the way back to the cavern you just came from. Two similar gates are set into the wall on the far side of the pit. Will you:

Open the portcullis behind you and eturn to the cavern?	Turn to **73**.
Cross the pit and open the portcullis on the left?	Turn to **131**.
Cross the pit and open the portcullis on the right?	Turn to **209**.

21

'Correct!' intones the ghostly voice, 'go free with my blessing.' The stone door swings open, and you swiftly leave the chamber. Add 1 to your DELAYS score but restore 2 LUCK points for your escape. Now, if you haven't already, will you investigate the other open door in this passage (turn to **230**), or return to the junction and explore the other end of the passage (turn to **10**).

22

You place your trophies upon the altar and beseech the spirits of your ancestors to help you in your quest. At first, silence is your only response, but then a powerful gust blasts into the tent, sending Valgrek's mystic paraphernalia flying into the air and threatening to uproot the tent itself. Voices can be heard on the wind, speaking as one and carrying the combined wisdom of the ages.

'You must save our people. Your heart is true and your offering is worthy. You shall join our ranks and become the next chieftain of the tribe.'

The charcoal map on the side of the tent begins to glow, its once-black lines now shining brilliantly in gold. The glow starts in the spot where Boneridge Village is marked out; it then moves southwards, tracing a path to a large, roughly circular area deep in the south of the Plain of Bones.

'Seek the wizard's crystal that was made to undo the evil of the gem. Seek the resting place of the mighty lords of old. You must save them...' The glow fades from the map and the voices die away on the wind. You have your answer. Restore 2 LUCK points and turn to **87**.

23

You try to compose yourself as the maddened bull thunders towards you. At the last moment you launch yourself into the air – *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, your leap lifts you clear of the beast. You land lightly on your feet and quickly dash away from the creature, which is preparing to charge once more; turn to **152**. If you are Unlucky, your feet snag on the top of the beast's frill. You slam into the back of the Boneridge and then tumble off into the dirt – lose 3 STAMINA points. You regain your senses just as the bull gallops towards you again; turn to **69**.

24

You turn and run from the adult Shingleback, but not before its powerful spiked tail clips your side (lose 2 STAMINA points). Realizing that you are unlikely to escape the enraged beast on foot, you look for a place to hide. You dive inside the hollow trunk of a fallen tree and pray that the Shingleback will leave you alone. The maddened creature thrashes its huge tail at the log, battering it relentlessly. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you suffer no injuries. If you are Unlucky, one of the Shingleback's tail-spikes penetrates through the log and into your side; lose 3 STAMINA points. Eventually the beast loses interest and lumbers away to join its family. You wriggle out of the hollow log and leave the woods as fast as your feet will carry you; turn to **7**.

25

The luminous fungus tastes strangely sweet and filling (restore 4 STAMINA points) but it also has a deadly side effect. Your vision begins to blur, the straight lines of the tower's stonework bending and warping before your eyes. Your new affliction makes it difficult to do much of anything – reduce your SKILL by 1 point (the effects will wear off in time: restore 1 point to your SKILL once you have left the Cauldron). For now you stagger back into the tower, your vision pulsating in sickening waves. Will you now examine the weapons if you haven't already done so (turn to **234**), or leave this area and ascend the staircase (turn to **34**)?

26

You roll away the weights and slide the lattice away from the hole. You peer down into the hole, but it is too deep to see anything in the dim light. You are about to replace the lid when a faint moan can be heard from below. It sounded like a human voice, but you cannot be sure. Whatever is down there smells foul. If you possess a Rope, you can descend into the hole to see what is there (turn to **102**). Otherwise, if you haven't done so already, you can look in the central hole (turn to **134**), or the hole on the right (turn to **180**). Otherwise you leave the cavern, turn to **46**.

27

The beast's eyelids flick open, revealing twin golden orbs that fix you with a heart-stopping gaze. You have woken the Red Dragon from its decades of uninterrupted slumber! The reptilian monster rears up on to its hind legs and unfolds its vast wings, filling the cavern with its wingspan. All you can do its grip your weapon and prepare for the epic confrontation.

RED DRAGON SKILL 12 STAMINA 20

Every time your opponent wins an Attack Round, roll one die and consult the table below to see what attack it uses against you (you may *Test your Luck* to reduce the damage inflicted in the normal way):

ROLL	ATTACK
1-2	Tail Swipe – your opponent whips its tail at you, inflicting 2 STAMINA points of damage and knocking you off your feet. Fight the next round with a -1 penalty to your Attack Strength as you get to your feet.
2-4	Claws – the Dragon swipes at you with its wicked claws, inflicting 3 STAMINA points of damage.
5-6	Fireball – a ball of fire bursts from the Dragon's jaws, scorching your hair and exposed flesh. Lose 4 STAMINA points.

After four Attack Rounds, turn to **56**. If you wish to try and flee from the maddened beast, turn to **176**. If you somehow manage to defeat your mighty opponent, turn to **124**.

28

The tunnel continues for a short distance before opening up into another chamber. You can hear the faint sound of trickling water coming from somewhere in front of you. If you are carrying a lit torch, or wish to light one now (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet* if you do), turn to **50**. If not, turn to **112**.

29

You trek onwards, nearing ever closer to your home. The horizon is thick with cloud, but through them you can just make out the glow of the sun as it dips into the east. Wait a minute – the sun should set in the west! You look closer and realise that what you thought was cloud is actually a massive plume of smoke, pouring out of a raging fire in the distance. As you get closer you can see a wildfire burning out of control. It stretches right across your path and, to make things worse, the winds are fanning it in your direction. You can try and find a way around it by either heading left (turn to **145**), or right (turn to **120**). Otherwise you can fall back and wait until the fire burns itself out (turn to **59**).

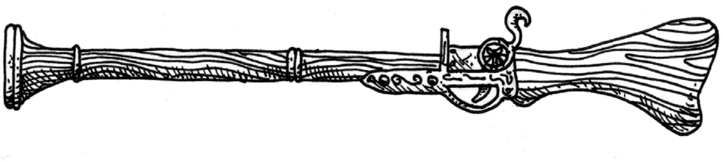
30

The rotting giant falls at last, crumpling to the ground under your furious assault. You take your opportunity and flee from the claustrophobic crypts, up the stairs and back to the warm and welcoming daylight.

You have faced the corrupt ruler of this fallen empire, but are unfortunately no closer to figuring out where Valgrek has taken your people. As the sun slowly sets behind the rim of the Cauldron you realize that you have run out of time. Your tribe is lost, and your adventure ends here...

31

A lucky blow causes the winged beast to relax its grasp for a moment, which is all you need to pull yourself free of its clutches. You drop several metres through the air before crashing into the creature's nest. Roll one die and lose that many STAMINA points. If you are still alive, you pick yourself up to face the creature's next attack; turn to **114**.



32

It is just past midday when you arrive at the edge of the Cauldron, a vast circular valley created by a cataclysmic event in ancient times. It stretches out before you, a verdurous, steaming expanse of grasslands and jungle. The land to the east is dominated by the remnants of a once-mighty empire; its crumbling ruins poke haphazardly out of the ground like jagged teeth. To the west the lush terrain becomes a large swamp, carpeted with reeds. In the distant south the far side of the Cauldron pushes up against the impenetrable Mountains of Grief. Somewhere in this immense crater lies the key to the salvation of your tribe.

First, however, you must find safe passage down into the valley. The cliffs here are too steep to descend, but a short distance to the right a steep, narrow track plunges down to the valley floor. In some places it is little more than a thin ledge poking out from the sheer cliff walls. Clearly it will be a dangerous trail to take, but also the most direct. Following the crater's edge around to the left you see that the cliffs give way to a gentle pass, but it will take you at least a couple of hours to reach.

Knowing that time is slipping away, will you attempt to descend the path to the right (turn to **270**), or head left and take the longer journey to the pass (turn to **37**)?

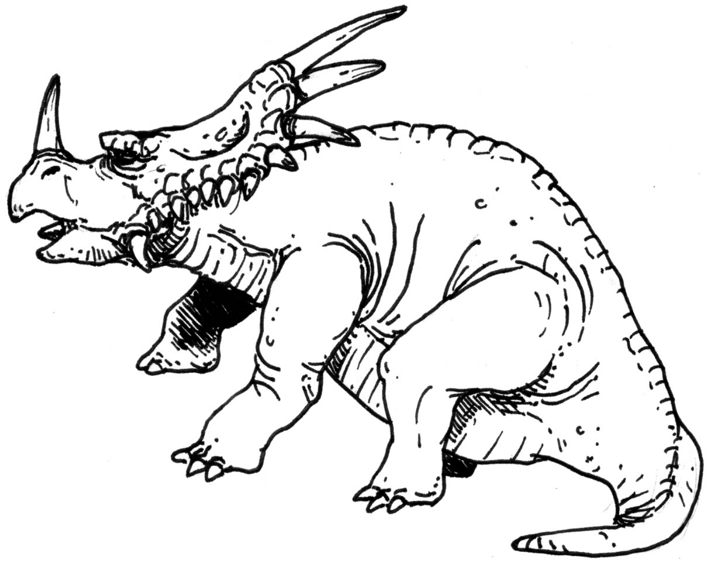
33

With the utmost care you edge down the steep track, trying to focus on the impossibly slim strip of terrain in front of you and not the valley floor that lays hundreds of feet below.

The trail continues to narrow until it is barely the width of your footprint. You are forced to hug the rock face and shuffle along the ledge, step by cautious step, as the wind whips about you, threatening to pull you away from the cliff to a gruesome death. One misstep and your quest will be over in a single terrifying moment.

Test your Skill; if you are successful, you are able to safely navigate along the ledge until it widens once more. If you are unsuccessful, you lose your footing and slip off the edge. Fortunately, you land on another ledge several metres below, though the impact shakes a few teeth loose (lose 3 STAMINA points).

The track continues to wind a torturous path down the face of the cliff. Eventually it terminates in a steep, boulder-strewn slope that covers the last dozen metres to the valley floor. Half-walking, half-sliding on the loose rocks, you negotiate your way to the bottom of the Cauldron. Roll one die; if the result is a 1-3, turn to **224**. If the result is a 4-6, turn to **194**.



34

You clamber back up the staircase to the window where you first entered the tower. This time you are ready for the gap in the steps and jump it easily. Add 1 to your DELAYS score. If you haven't already done so, you can venture to top of the tower (turn to **45**). Otherwise you leave and explore elsewhere (turn to **165**).

35

You remove your rucksack and lie flat on your stomach. With the sack held before you, you crawl into the tight confines of the tunnel. If you are carrying a lit torch you must leave it behind, as it is too dangerous to carry it with you.

There is barely enough room to lift your arms to pull yourself forward and, with your belongings in front of you, you can see nothing of what lies ahead. Inch by inch you wriggle along, your laboured breaths blowing little puffs of dust up from the floor. The tunnel constricts even further, until the passage is so tight that your back is scraping along the roof.

Your entire life has been spent in the wide-open plains beneath an endless sky; having to squeeze through such a confined space is a completely alien experience for you and, inevitably, panic starts to set in. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful you close your eyes, breathing deeply and focusing on regaining your calm. If you are unsuccessful you are wracked with an intense bout of claustrophobia; you thrash about, trying desperately to break free from your stony prison, but all you achieve are some nasty cuts and bruises and a great deal of stress (lose 4 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point).

Eventually you are able to continue and, mercifully, the passage starts to widen again. Turn to **65**.

36

You set out east from Boneridge Village, enjoying the gentle warmth of the morning sun on your face. Ahead of you lie miles of barren scrubland sprinkled with irregularly-shaped boulders and twisted bushes.

After a couple of hours you arrive at Courga Rock, an enormous boulder shaped like the head of some giant feline predator. The open jaws of the cat-stone are littered with the sun-dried remnants of old food. Your people believe that the rock has divine powers, and some venture out this way to seek guidance from the gods. Your deities are those of pride and vengeance, who reward strength and despise weakness and mercy. Communing with them is a process that can last anywhere from an hour to several days!

Will you pause here to seek instruction from a higher power (turn to **252**), or, knowing that time is of the essence, forge on eastwards (turn to **204**)?

37

You follow the north-eastern rim of the massive crater until the sheer cliffs become a gentle slope. A trio of Oldbone warriors are waiting there for you, left behind by Valgrek to deal with anyone who might dare follow him. They advance silently towards you; their blankly staring eyes glowing red in their hairy faces. You must fight two of the warriors at the same time; Kuwi will deal with the other.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First NEANDERTHAL	7	9
Second NEANDERTHAL	8	8

If you win you find that Kuwi has also conquered her foe. Together you descend the slope to the lush valley floor. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **194**.

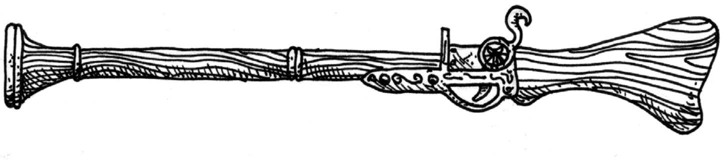
38

You find Wanushu sharpening the edge of his huge metal axe, a wondrous weapon he acquired on one of his adventures in the World-Beyond-the-Plains. He acknowledges you with the slightest of nods. You ask him if he has any advice for you.

'I would not tarry here much longer if I were you, young one. Each moment spent here is another moment wasted.' The broad-shouldered warrior glances at your weapon and rucksack. 'You travel lightly. Here, take this.'

Wanushu hands you a length of bone topped with flammable material and two stones of flint with which to ignite it (add the Torch to your *Adventure Sheet*). 'I have no need of fire in the Cauldron.' You shudder involuntarily at the mention of that cursed place, far to the south of the village. Wanushu grins. 'I do not believe Valgrek's ghost stories. Besides, if the legends do happen to be true, then that is where the greatest trophy will be found.'

With that he hefts his axe across his broad shoulders and sets off into the wilderness. You are now the only candidate remaining in Boneridge. You may still speak to Ogmil (turn to **160**), or Kuwi (turn to **144**) if you wish. Otherwise you set off on your journey, turn to **175**.



39

Your travels take you down into a deep and narrow gully formed by the meeting of two craggy outcrops. As you carefully edge your way down the steep path you sight one of your fellow candidates. You recognise him as Sefu, a proud and arrogant warrior around the same age as you. Since you were both young you have continually competed with each other, be it in hunting, racing or combat. This fierce lifelong rivalry, and Sefu's continued stubbornness, has prevented the pair of you from ever forming a proper friendship.

At this very moment Sefu is fighting for his life against a massive four-legged beast that has him cornered in one end of the ravine. Its wide body and squat head are covered in thick plates of bony armour and a similarly-protected tail swings behind the creature, ending in a bulbous, spiked club of fused bone. You fear that this will be a one-sided fight, for Sefu is armed only with a hunting spear.

Will you rush to lend Sefu your aid (turn to **146**), or will you leave your rival to his fate and continue on your way (turn to **193**)?

40

The rocky landscape climbs higher and higher, culminating in a forbidding black peak which stabs into the cloudless afternoon sky. You clamber up the side of the mountain, finding easy handholds in the crack-riddled stone. The ragged slash of a cave entrance greets you about halfway up the peak; above it, the face of the mountain becomes much steeper, so you enter the cave.

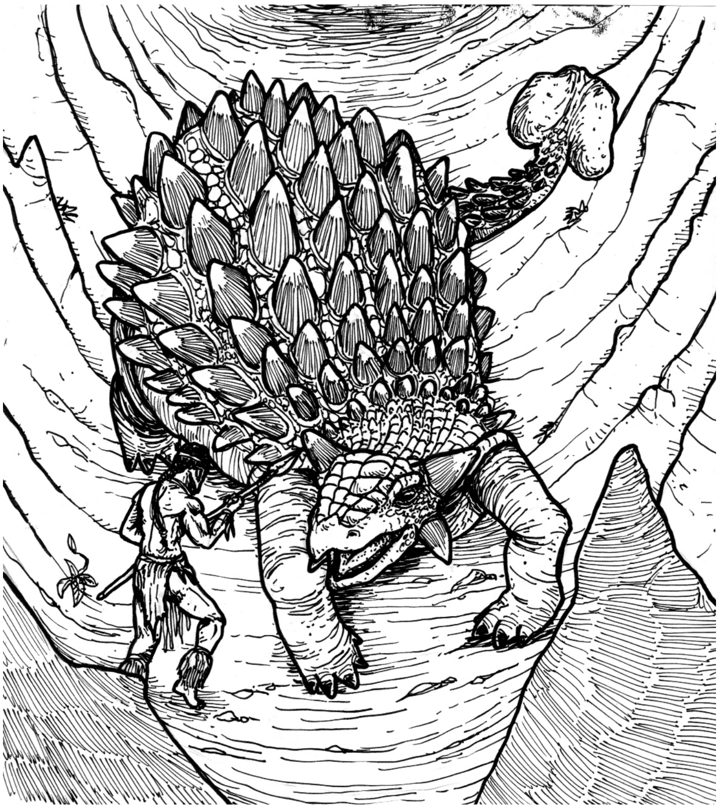
If you have the codeword *Urap* on your *Adventure Sheet,* your companion refuses to follow you into the cave. You will not be able to call upon his help again until you leave it.

It takes a few minutes for your eyes to fully adjust to the darkness. If you possess a torch and want to light it, you can do so now (remove the item from your *Adventure Sheet*). If you cannot or do not wish to light a torch, you must continue with a -4 penalty to your SKILL until you leave the caves or light a torch.

You notice the bones of countless creatures scattered about the floor of the cave. A strong animal odour hangs about the place, with a faint but sharp, acrid smell underlying it. The cave extends about fifteen metres into the mountain before splitting into two passages. Will you head left (turn to **100**) or right (turn to **6**)? Alternatively you can exit the cave and descend to the plains (turn to **237**).

41

You follow the tunnel as it descends hundreds of metres to the bottom of Oldbone Gorge, where it opens up into a large cave. Primitive spears and clubs line one wall, and there are numerous bloodstains on the floor. There are two openings in the far wall of the cavern, both blocked by gates fashioned from lashed-together bones. The opening on the left is smaller than the one on the right. Sunlight shines through both exits. Will you go through the smaller gate on the left (turn to **86**), or the larger gate on the right (turn to **137**)? Alternatively you can head back up the tunnel to the junction (turn to **63**).



42

You stand before the doorway marked XLII – the tomb of Thrandeus, the forty-second and final king of Celenasia. You push and pull at the door, but to no avail; it will not budge. Finally, in desperation, you yell out to the door: 'Open! Open so that I may look upon Thrandeus the Controller!'

At your command, the door slowly grinds backwards and then slides to the side, clearing the doorway. You step into a massive, high-ceiling chamber, supported by rows of thick columns carved with disturbing, writhing shapes. Similar esoteric designs feature in the tapestries and paintings that line the walls. The richly-carpeted stone floors are piled high with trinkets of gold and silver and studded with valuable stones. Dominating the centre of the vast chamber is a mighty stone sarcophagus. In the far wall of the room are set two more stone doorways.

The treasure is of no interest to you at the moment, so will you investigate the tomb (turn to **249**), or the doorways at the back of the chamber (turn to **157**).

43

You plunge into the wall of grass and sprint away as fast as you can. The Terrorclaws give chase, screeching at the thrill of the hunt. The light thuds of their dagger-claws hitting the ground behind you seem to be getting closer and closer, until you can almost feel the hot, reeking breath of the ravenous predators on the back of your neck. Roll one die; on a roll of 1-3, turn to **108**, on a roll of 4-6, turn to **92**.

44

You cautiously tiptoe past the slumbering beast, hoping against hope that your footfalls will not awake the sleeping giant. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, you sneak past the Dragon without incident and soon find the far side of the cavern; turn to **122**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **27**.

45

The staircase is missing many of its stone steps but, due to the severe lean of the tower, you are able to climb up it with ease. A square opening is set into the ceiling of the tower, where a wooden trapdoor once sat. You poke your head through the opening and come face-to-face with a long, dagger-like beak that jabs painfully into your forehead – lose 2 STAMINA points! The beak belongs to a large winged reptile with a broad crest projecting backwards from the top of its head. It screeches angrily and prepares to strike again with its toothless jaws. If you wish to explore the top of the tower, you will have to kill the thing!

PTERANODON	SKILL 7	STAMINA 12

If you do not want to face the winged beast, or if you wish to escape at any point during the battle, you can drop back through the opening and either follow the staircase to its bottom if you haven't already done so (turn to **187**) or leave the tower and explore elsewhere (turn to **165**). If you manage to defeat your opponent, turn to **71**.

46

You return to the entrance cave, where you can either follow the tunnel to the right (turn to **138**), or you can leave Oldbone Gorge altogether (turn to **170**).

47

Eventually the land before you begins to rise into a series of jagged granite ridges, from which sprout sporadic tufts of wiry yellow grass. You are getting close to the territory of the Oldbone tribe, mortal enemies of your people, whose village lies just past the first ridge in a deep gorge. You must tread carefully, for the degenerate Oldbones will attack you on sight. Will you venture a little bit further and risk being spotted (turn to **201**), or turn away from the ridges to flatter – and safer – ground (turn to **214**)?

48

Evening is falling when the welcome sight of Boneridge Village appears, bathed in the fiery glow of the setting sun. After two days of exploring the deadly Plain of Bones you can finally return home and stake your claim as chieftain of the tribe. If you have the code word *Urap* on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to **268**. Otherwise turn to **203**.

49

The tall grass rises up above your head, obscuring any sight of the horizon. You must now rely on the passage of the sun to work out in which direction you are heading. There are many stories of unfortunate hunters who have lost their bearings in the grasslands, wandering in circles for days before eventually dying of starvation. You must be cautious.

For several hours you trudge through the endless grass fields. All is quiet save for your own breathing and the rustling of the grass stalks as you push through them. That is until you hear a high-pitched yapping coming from somewhere off to your left. Will you investigate (turn to **236**), or keep to your bearing (turn to **121**)?

50

The chamber is rent by a narrow but deep chasm that stretches across your path from one wall to the other. Water must be flowing through the rift somewhere far below. The only way across the chasm is via a stone slab that someone has placed here in ages past. You cross over the makeshift bridge and continue to the far side of the cave, which narrows to a tunnel once more before again opening up into another chamber. Turn to **202**.

51

The tunnel descends into the ground, winding irregularly through the rock. Holes line one side of the tunnel, passing through to the gorge outside and letting a little light into the gloom. Every so often you come across a small chamber, but they contain nothing of interest except stinking animal skins and gnawed chunks of bone. Still you do not come across another living being – it is as if the entire Oldbone tribe has suddenly abandoned their village. The tunnel ends at a low-roofed cavern in which three holes have been gouged out of the rock. Each is covered with a woven lid of branches and bones, weighted down with heavy stones. You peer into each of the holes but the lattices are woven too tightly to see past them. If you wish to lift up one of the lids and see what lies beneath them, turn to **135**. If not, there is nothing more to do here and you return the way you came; turn to **46**.

52

The Lizard Men are unaffected by the power of the Halcyon Crystal. As you point it towards them, one of the reptilian warriors thrusts its spear at you, knocking the crystal from your grasp! Remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*; you will no longer be able to call upon its power. Now return to **62**.

53

You both take a moment to catch your breaths after the battle. Regain 1 LUCK point. Sefu turns towards you, features contorted by anger. 'Why did you do that?' he yells, 'I had everything under control! Now you've driven the beast away and ruined my hunt!'

You try to explain that he most definitely did not have the situation in hand and that you were only trying to help, but Sefu is deaf to your reasoning. 'I never asked for your help and I never will! You just can't stand the fact that I'm a better hunter than you. Stay away and let me get on with winning the competition.'

With that, Sefu storms off up the slope you have just descended. You decide it would be wise to head in the opposite direction. Add the codeword *Ufes* to your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to **128**.

54

If you possess a javelin, you can attempt to throw it at the Slaver Gem. *Test your Skill*; if you are successful, turn to **260**. If you are unsuccessful, the spear misses the mark; remove the Javelin from your *Adventure Sheet* and return to **261** to continue your battle. If you do not have a javelin, your only option is to try and climb up to the Tyrant King's scaly hide and cut the Slaver Gem free. *Test your Skill* three times in succession. If you are successful all three times, turn to **260**. If you fail even one roll, the Tyrant King will lock its jaws around your torso and snap them shut – lose 6 STAMINA points. If you survive this savaging, the monster mercifully releases you; return to **261** and continue your battle.

55

Hands held outstretched in supplication, you hurriedly back away from the disturbed beast. The creature answers by charging towards you, domed skull aimed right for your chest. Quickly you throw yourself behind a stone pillar, which the beast promptly crashes into head-on. The pillar is cracked in two, shards of stone flying everywhere, but amazingly the creature still stands! Grunting in annoyance, it steps around the shattered column and attacks once more.

PACHYCEPHALOSAURUS SKILL 8 STAMINA 10

Having disposed of your opponent, you investigate the fallen figure, only to reveal the marble statue of a man, toppled during the cataclysm. Its stern carven eyes seem to stare accusingly at you. Fighting back a wave of disappointment, you decide to leave the cursed mansion and hope to find better fortune elsewhere. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **165**.

56

Once more the enraged Dragon swipes at you with its claws. This time you are too slow in dodging its attack, and the beast smashes your weapon out of your hand. It skitters away into the darkness and out of reach. If you have the codeword *Rewoperif* written down, turn to **211**. If not, you will have to fight the Dragon with your bare hands! Return to **27**, but from now on you fight with a -4 penalty to your Attack Strength. Each wound you inflict upon the dragon will only reduce its STAMINA by 1 point each time. May the gods grant you a swift death!

57

You take a breath and then step forward, flinging your dagger at the nearest antelope. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **140**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **198**.

58

You find nothing of interest in the fissures except for, mysteriously, the corpses of several bats. You move on to the pile of rocks and begin sifting through them. They are not a natural formation – someone or something has placed them here.

As you poke through the rocks, your temples begin to throb as a headache takes hold (lose 1 STAMINA point). You are considering giving up your search when your hand brushes against the smooth, cold surface of a metal object, trapped at the very bottom of the pile. Will you continue digging and recover the mysterious item (turn to **163**), or leave the cave through a tunnel on the far side of the chamber (turn to **28**)?

59

You retreat back from where you came, keeping a close eye on the wildfire all the while. Its flames race across the ground quicker than you had thought possible, until it is only a few hundred feet away. At that moment, the wind changes direction and the wildfire turns its attentions elsewhere. It is several hours until the flames have died down enough for you to continue your journey; by that time, night has fallen. You may have survived the wildfire but you may also have missed the judgement ceremony. You spring homewards as fast as you can; turn to **48**.

60

Bolts of agony lance up your leg as a steel trap, hidden in the grass, clamps shut upon your ankle; lose 3 STAMINA points! You crumple to the ground in pain. After a while you recover enough to try and loosen the trap. If you have the codeword *Urap* written down, turn to **101**. If not, you will have to try and pull open the trap with your bare hands. Roll three dice and *Test your Stamina*. If you are successful, turn to **127**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **258**.

61

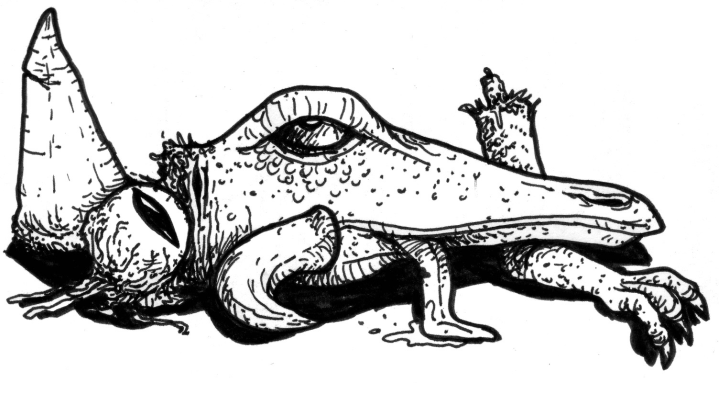
Night is fast approaching as you cross the savannah far to the north of your village. The vast grasslands stretch out as far as you can see; small collections of trees lie scattered about them like islands in a sea of green. Between them roam fleets of animals; Antelope, Buffalo and spike-tailed Shinglebacks among them. Each herd is settling down for the evening, and it is time that you did too. Will you risk sleeping out in the open (turn to **150**) or seek protection in the branches of a tree (turn to **3**)?

62

The prison caravan has drawn to a halt. Valgrek, atop his fearsome steed, is conversing with a group of scaly humanoid figures, mounted on beasts of their own. Suddenly you are spotted! Three of the riders urge their mounts towards you. As they approach closer, you recognize them as Lizard Men, wielding cruelly barbed javelins. You must fight all three at the same time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First LIZARD MAN	7	8
Second LIZARD MAN	8	8
Third LIZARD MAN	8	7

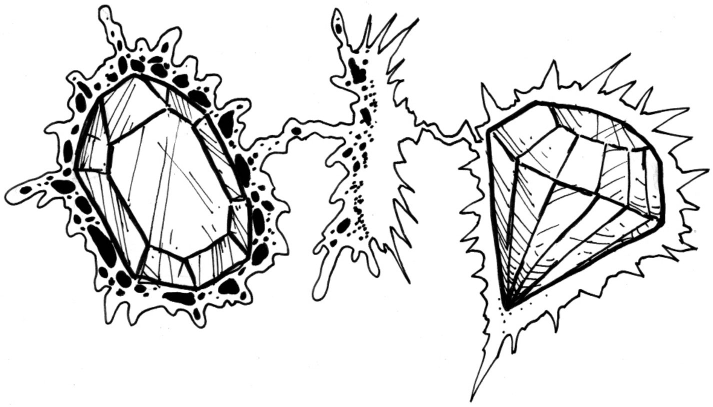
If you manage to defeat your opponents their steeds will lumber away in fear. While you were fighting, however, another warrior has arrived. This one is larger, more heavily



armed and wields an enormous thonged whip.

LIZARD MAN CHAMPION SKILL 10 STAMINA 9

If the Lizard Man Champion wins an Attack Round, his whip curls about your ankle and pulls you off balance. You spend the next Attack Round getting to your feet and can do no damage to your opponent, even if you win that Round. If you defeat this bloodthirsty warrior, turn to **263**.



63

You return to the junction and decide on your next move. You may not return to a place you have already explored. Will you go:

Left?	Turn to **206**.
Right?	Turn to **218**.
Straight ahead?	Turn to **41**.

Alternatively you can return to the entrance cave (turn to **104**).

64

You stand beside Ogmil, overlooking the valley where your tribe keeps their herd of Boneridge beasts. The lanky apprentice points into the distance, across the valley to the mysterious southern lands.

'That is where our people are. Can you not see?' You strain your eyes but cannot see what Ogmil is referring to.

'No?' he smirks, 'Why don't you take a closer look?' With that Ogmil gives you a heavy shove, pushing you over the edge of the cliff! *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **14**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **177**.

65

The tunnel opens up into a small cavern, the walls of which stretch so high that you can't detect where they end. A sound not unlike that of rustling leaves surrounds you – there are living things inside the cave with you!

If you are a carrying a lit torch, or possess a torch and wish to light it (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet* if you do), turn to **196**. If you wish to push on ahead in the darkness, turn to **242**.

66

Although you are both the same age, Paru has yet to grow into the body of a man. His limbs are still thin and willowish, and his features have retained the softness of boyhood. He grins as he sees you approach.

'There you are! I've been looking for you everywhere. Listen, I'm not cut out for this monster-slaying business. Why don't we join forces? You can take whatever trophy we find; you'd make a better chieftain anyway! What do you say? Two hunters are better than one, old friend.'

The proposition is tempting. Together you may be able to kill a mightier creature than you would be able to alone. Do you want to take Paru up on his offer (turn to **113**), or decline it (turn to **195**)?

67

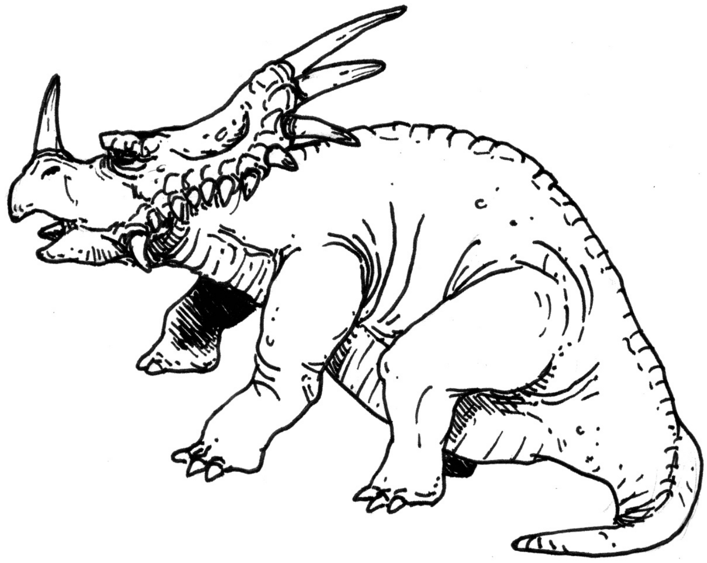
The bony-skulled beast flinches as you approach but stands its ground. Slowly, step-by-step, you edge across the hall towards the creature and the mysterious figure at its clawed feet. When you are about a dozen metres away, the beast snorts in agitation, lowers its domed head and points it directly at you. It almost appears as if the beast is bowing in deference to you! Will you continue your advance (turn to **239**) ,or rethink your approach (turn to **55**)?

68

You present Kilgar with your trophy (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*). He holds it before him, turning it about and examining it from all angles. A big grin splits his bearded face. 'You know, this might just do the trick! I've never seen anything like it. It must have come from a truly fearsome creature. Iskander, bring me the chest!'

The guide rushes over to one of the camels and returns with a small wooden box. Kilgar opens its lid and pulls out a chunk of gleaming yellow metal. 'Fangthane gold,' he says, his face glowing with pride, 'the purest of the pure, and the most precious metal known to Dwarfkind. I give this to you in thanks for what you have done for me today. May the blessings of the Earth-mother be with you.'

You take the chunk of metal from Kilgar, though you are unsure what use it will have (add the Fangthane Gold to your *Adventure Sheet*). With the help of his aides, Kilgar mounts his camel and starts his long journey home to Vynheim. You also have some way to go before your quest is over. Add 1 point to your LUCK score and turn to **47**.



69

You attempt to sidestep the Boneridge as it rushes past you, but you are not quite quick enough. The edge of the beast's bony neck-frill clips your side as it passes, knocking you to the ground and forcing all the air from your lungs; lose 2 STAMINA points. As you stagger to your feet, gasping for air, the boneridge bull wheels around and charges again.

MONOCLONIUS SKILL 8 STAMINA 13

If you win an Attack Round, you can use the opportunity to retreat from your enraged opponent (turn to **152**). If you manage to slay the mighty creature, you may claim a trophy from it (add the Bull's Horn to your *Adventure Sheet*) before resting and continuing on; turn to **136**.

70

You are almost through the trees when your rucksack snags on a particularly vicious thorn. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you manage to unhook it before any damage can be done. If you are Unlucky, your sack rips open, spilling your possessions on to the dirt. The rucksack is ruined and from now on you will only be able to carry whatever you can hold in your hands. You can strap your dagger to your side, leaving you free to take two items with you (each Provision counts as one item). The rest you must leave behind (cross the items off your *Adventure Sheet*). If you pick up anything on your journey, you must leave an old item behind in order to take the new one with you. Turn to **167**.

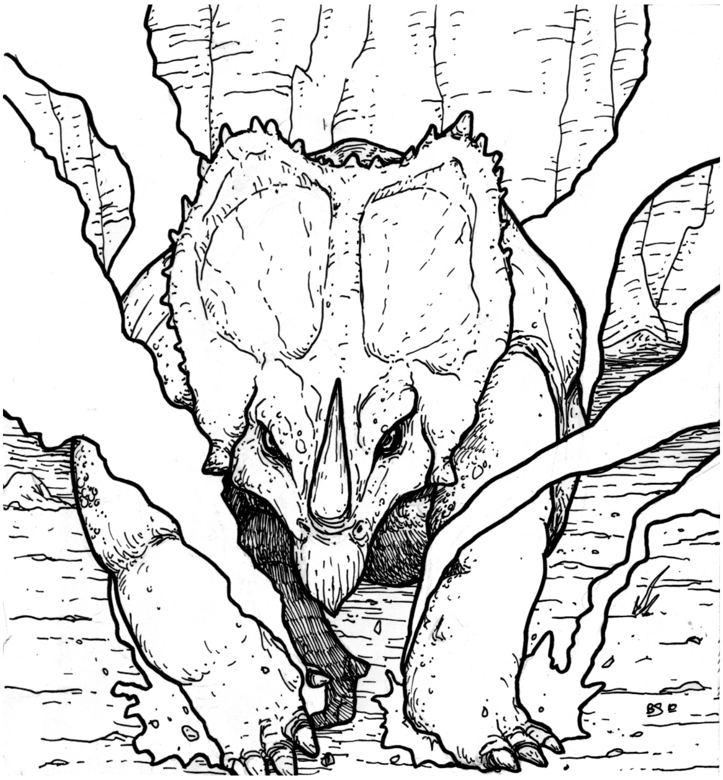
71

Your foe crumples into a heap, its paper-like wings torn to shreds by your weapon. Free to continue, you haul yourself through the opening to the roof of the tower. Unfortunately, you find nothing of interest up here except the creature's stinking nest of branches and bones. Add 1 to your DELAYS score. Now, if you haven't already done so, will you follow the staircase to its bottom (turn to **187**) or leave the tower and explore elsewhere (turn to **165**)?

72

For hours you trek across the plains, a smattering of thorn-trees your only protection from the savage afternoon sun. After some time, you spot the ruins of a building in the distance. It must be from the elder days, for the plains-tribes do not build in stone.

The tales you heard in your youth still ring fresh in your mind; of a glorious civilization ruled by emperors whose pride and insatiable lust for power brought about their downfall. All that remains now are the crumbled remnants of their once-mighty realm, one rumoured to be haunted by the anguished spectres of that long-dead race.



If the stories are true, you would do well to give the ruin a wide berth (turn to **133**); and yet only by investigating it yourself can you put any truth to the old tales (turn to **192**).

73

There is no rope on this side that you can use pull to open the portcullis and, try as you might, you cannot lift the heavy gate. The walls of the pit are too high and too sheer to climb, so you will have to cross to the far side of the pit and either try the gate on the left (turn to **131**), or the gate on the right (turn to **209**).

74

Centuries ago, before the arrival of their current inhabitants, these caves were considered a holy place by the local people, long since vanished from the face of Titan. Their wise men would come to this chamber and commune with their deities, and in return were granted fantastic visions. Little did they know that these visions were not of divine origin, but were instead caused by the natural gas that seeps slowly through the fissures in the ground. The very same gas leak is ignited by your lit torch, creating a massive fireball that consumes you and demolishes the chamber. Your adventure ends here.

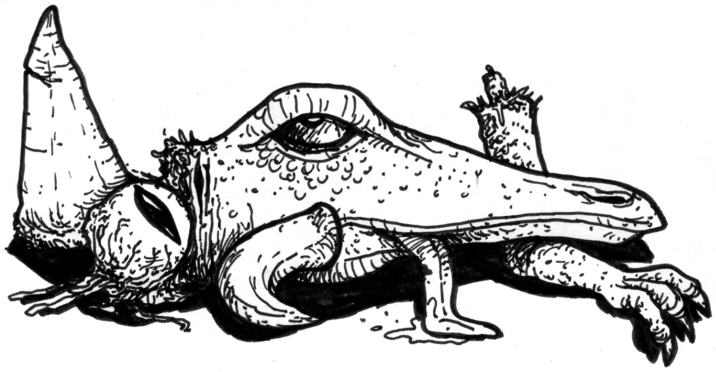
75

You cut off Vendictus' trip down memory lane and hurriedly explain how Valgrek betrayed your people. You impress upon the ghostly wizard that time is of the essence and that if he can help you find them, he needs to do so immediately!

'Is this how all the people of today are? So hasty. But very well, let me see if I can detect the presence of the Slaver Gem.' Vendictus closes his incorporeal eyes and mutters a few unintelligible syllables. After a few moments, his eyes flick open once more.

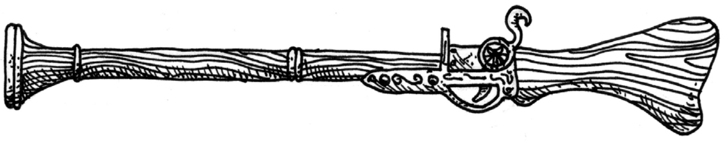
'It lies far to the east of the Cauldron, and is being taken farther away by the moment. Fleet of foot you must be if you are to have any hope of catching up to it'.

At last you know the location of your kidnapped tribe; restore 1 LUCK point. Thanking the wizardly shade, you leave his crypt, swinging the stone door back into place. Add the codeword *Noitacol* to your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to **243**.



76

You are forced to head back the way you came, rounding the fringes of the swamp and then striking back to the east through a narrow strip of woodland that hugs the edge of the Cauldron. It is a long, tiring trek, but also an uneventful one. Soon you reach the eastern rim of the valley; add 2 to your DELAYS and turn to **250**.



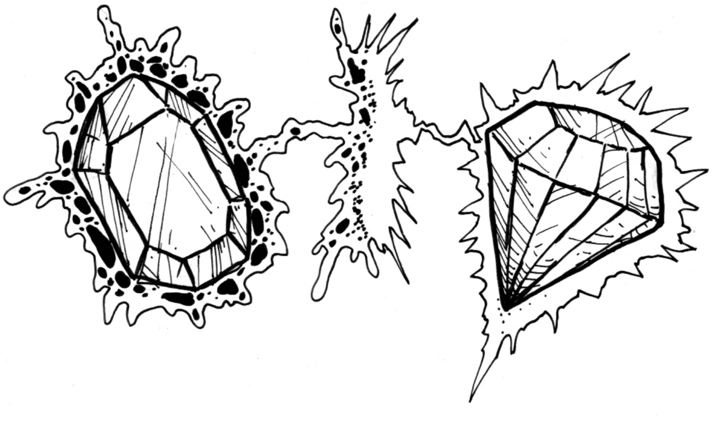
77

The water erupts in front of you as a massive pair of scaly green jaws lunge towards you! *Test your Luck*. If you are Unlucky, the CROCODILE snaps its mouth around your head and drags you down to a gruesome demise. If you are Lucky, your instincts and lightning reflexes save you from certain death. The colossal reptile clambers up the slope towards you and you must fight.

CROCODILE	SKILL 7	STAMINA 8

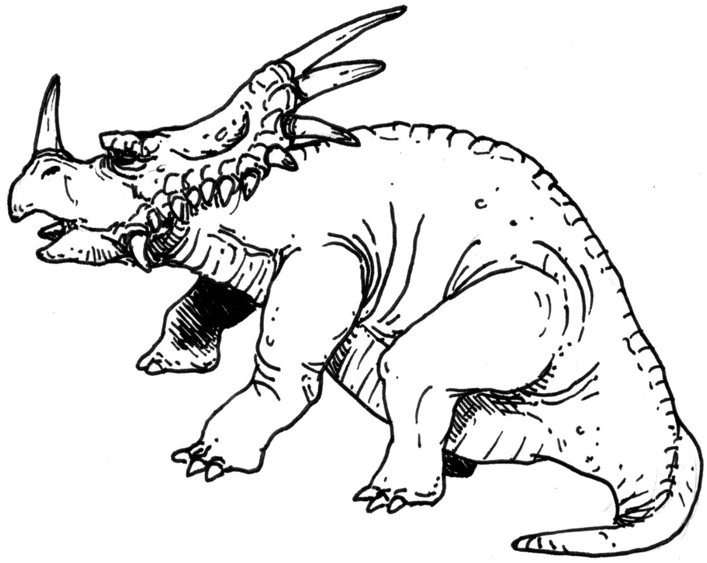
If the Crocodile wins two Attack Rounds in a row, it will snag you in its jaws and drag you into the shallows of the watering hole. If this happens, add 2 to the creature's Attack Strength as it is now fighting on its terms.

If you are victorious you may remove a handful of teeth from the corpse as a trophy (add the Crocodile Teeth to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so). You finish drinking your fill and set off once more. Evening is approaching, and it will soon be time to seek shelter for the night. Turn to **61**.



78

You hammer frantically at the creature, but to no avail. Eventually a lucky blow causes the winged beast to relax its grasp for a moment, which is all you need to pull yourself free of its clutches. You drop through the air for what seems like an eternity, before crashing heavily into the creature's nest. Roll two dice and lose that many STAMINA points. If you are still alive, you pick yourself up and face the creature's next attack; turn to **114**.



79

Your ancestors are insulted by your offering and silence is the only response you receive. You have no idea where your people have been taken to and, even if you do eventually figure it out, it will be too late to save them. Your adventure ends here.

80

You draw your weapon and prepare to do battle. If you have the codeword *Urap* written on your *Adventure Sheet*, your companion flees for his life (cross off the codeword and note that you can no longer benefit from his added attack). The Terrorclaws keep their wicked bird-like eyes trained on you. The pack leader pounces with another terrible hiss. Two of the other predators follow its lead. You must combat the three of them at once!

	SKILL	STAMINA
First DEINONYCHUS	7	8
Second DEINONYCHUS	7	7
Third DEINONYCHUS	8	7

If you find the battle going against you, you can disengage from combat and flee by turning to **43**, but deduct 4 points from your STAMINA as one of the beasts rakes its claws down your spine. If you are determined to fight it out and are somehow victorious, turn to **164**.

81

You walk through the bone-strewn clearing, past the grinning skulls of long-dead monsters and thighbones that tower above you. The vast ribcage of some leviathan arches overhead, forming a bizarre ossific avenue down which you wander.

A menacing snarl echoes through the boneyard. Before your astonished eyes, a large creature materializes out of thin air, its bipedal body shimmering with an ethereal green light. It stalks towards you on two clawed legs, its stunted forelimbs waving futilely. Tiny, hungry eyes, crested by a pair of thick horns, glare at you above the carnivore's slavering, box-like jaws. You have disturbed the spirits of the dinosaur graveyard and must fight its guardian!

SPECTRAL CARNOTAURUS SKILL 10 STAMINA 12

Normal weapons can not harm the ghost – only a magical weapon will be able to defeat it. If you have such a blade you can fight your opponent as usual. If not, your only hope is in flight. You must first win an Attack Round against the Carnotaurus, after which you can make your escape (but lose 2 STAMINA points as the ghostly therapod inflicts a parting blow). If you win the battle or manage to escape, you quickly race through the rest of the clearing before anything else untoward occurs. Turn to **32**.

82

As the riders close in, you begin to regret staying out in the open. The heads of the galloping beasts are surrounded with bony crests that stretch out into five jutting spikes, just like that of Ngodo's old pet, Longspike. The riders are covered in scaly skin, with long reptilian snouts and rows of spines running from their horned heads to their thick tails. Having spotted you, the two LIZARD MAN raiders rein in their steeds and begin barking at each other in their guttural language. After what appears to be a short argument, one of the warriors raises his jagged scimitar in triumph and guides his mount towards you. It appears he has won the right to slaughter you!

LIZARD MAN SKILL 7 STAMINA 7

You must reduce your SKILL by 1 for the duration of this battle, as the Lizard Man has the advantage of being mounted while you must fight from the ground. If you lose an Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 1 or 2, the Lizard Man's steed butts you with its spiked head and inflicts an extra 2 STAMINA point of damage.

If you are victorious, the now-riderless beast turns and gallops off across the plains. The remaining Lizard Man raider hisses at you in fury before wheeling his mount about and returning west. You may claim your opponent's scimitar as a trophy if you wish (add the Lizard Man Scimitar to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do) before heading in the opposite direction; turn to **29**.

83

You strike the monster a powerful blow directly between its lidded eyes. Turn to **27**, but deduct 4 points from the creature's STAMINA score.

84

The green liquid burns as it slides down your throat, but almost instantly you are filled with energy, as if you have just woken up from a long and restful sleep. Restore your STAMINA score to its *Initial* level. Buzzing with newfound vigour, you leave the tomb. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to 243.

85

You offer your trophy to the Felinaur leader (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*) and wait nervously as he inspects it. 'So, you think yourself a mighty hunter?' he chuckles, tossing the trophy to one of his fellow hunters. 'Seek out the winged vuurdraak in the northern kopjes for a true challenge. If you are fortunate, his fiery breath will kill you quickly!'

With a shake of his mane, the Felinaur leader pads past you to the fallen antelope. You take the opportunity to slip into the grass and hurry away from the clearing. Turn to **89**.

86

You swing open the gate and step out onto the floor of Oldbone Gorge, which is wedged between two steep ridges. The ground is strewn with huge boulders that have tumbled down the cliffs over the centuries. A disc of blue sky gazes down on you from hundreds of metres above, where you first entered the warrens. To your right, a large shallow pit has been dug out of the rock. To the left, the gorge stretches off into the distance. Will you:

Investigate the pit?	Turn to **123**.
Explore the far end of the gorge?	Turn to **228**.
Return to the cavern?	Turn to **12**.

87

Now you know your destination – the Cauldron: a vast and verdant valley that lies far to the south of Boneridge. According to the ancient tribal tales it was once the site of a powerful and wondrous civilization, but their people grew too proud and their kingdom was cast down. Now the Cauldron is said to be a cursed place, populated with giant monsters and haunted by the spectres of the vengeful dead. Nevertheless, that is where you must go if you are to have any hope of saving your people.

It is now the middle of the night. You decide to find a place to sleep and set off at first light. The rest does you well, and you can restore up to 4 STAMINA points.

As the sun rises on another morning, you and Kuwi set about gathering some supplies for the journey ahead. You may take up to five Provisions and five flammable torches with you (note what you bring with you on your *Adventure Sheet*, but remember that you can only hold ten items in your rucksack at a time).

Kuwi is now your travelling companion, and she will aid you in battle against any opponents you may face. You may add 2 to your Attack Strength while she accompanies you. Now, if you have the codeword *Urap* on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to **215**. If you do not, turn to **132**.

88

You manage to arrest your fall and, more carefully this time, make your way down to the gully floor. Sefu is trying his best to keep the heavily armoured creature at bay, but his opponent is enraged and lumbers forward to attack. You leap to the side of your fellow tribesman and together you face the mighty brute.

ANKYLOSAURUS SKILL 8

Your weapons have no hope of piercing the creature's plated body, but together you and Sefu may be able to drive the beast away. Add 2 to your Attack Strength for the duration of this battle to represent the aid that Sefu gives you. If the Ankylosaurus wins an Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, the monster's powerful club-tail smashes into you, inflicting 6 STAMINA points of damage; on a roll of 5-6, the tail strikes Sefu, causing him to lose 6 STAMINA points of damage. Sefu has a STAMINA score of 15. Keep track of the wounds he receives; if his STAMINA score ever reaches 0 he will be killed and you must face the Ankylosaurus alone (and you will no longer have the bonus to your Attack Strength that he gave).

After seven Attack Rounds, the Ankylosaurus will break off its attack and trundle away, leaving you to make your escape. Turn to **53** if Sefu is still alive. If Sefu did not survive the battle, turn to **128**.

89

The sun has almost vanished behind the towering grass when you start looking for a suitable place to make camp. As luck would have it, you come across a solitary baobab tree, marooned in a vast sea of grass. Its tall trunk should offer you protection from the majority of the plain's nocturnal predators. You clamber up the thick trunk and settle in between the branches at the top.

You must now eat one of your Provisions (mark it off your *Adventure Sheet*). If you cannot or will not, you will have to make do with the leaves and fruit you find on the tree; this will not fully satisfy your hunger, however, and you must lose 2 STAMINA points.

Fortunately, the night passes without incident and you wake refreshed and ready to continue. You only have until nightfall to find a suitable trophy and return to Boneridge Village for the judging ceremony. The way west leads only to the jungle and a certain death, so will you head north-west (turn to **39**), due north (turn to **47**), or due south and deeper into the grasslands (turn to **171**)?

90

You ready your weapon and prepare to face the fully-grown Shingleback, which stands over twice your height. You pray that the gods will see you through this epic confrontation.

STEGOSAURUS	SKILL 12	STAMINA 18

Each time the Stegosaurus wins an Attack Round, it will whip its massive tail at you, inflicting a grievous injury and causing you to lose 4 STAMINA points instead of the usual 2. You may attempt to *Escape* at any time by turning to **24**. If you somehow defeat your opponent you quickly flee the wood before the other adult attacks; turn to **7**.

91

Great double doors must have been set in the archway, but all that remains of them now are the rusted hinges. Beyond the doorway is a small natural cave. When the cataclysm that formed the Cauldron struck, the tower must have plunged halfway into the earth, meeting up with the cave by sheer coincidence.

Inside the cave you find bunches of small purple fungus, glowing faintly with some natural phosphorescence. If you wish to eat some of the peculiar fungi, turn to 25. Otherwise you can examine the weapons in the tower if you haven't already done so (turn to **234**) or leave this area and ascend the staircase (turn to **34**).

92

You charge blindly through the endless fields, expecting to be knocked to the ground by your hunters at any moment. Your lungs are soon at bursting point, so you risk slowing down and throw a glance behind you. To your amazement, the path is clear – have you managed to lose them? You can still hear them rustling through the grass a short distance away, calling to each other with angry shrieks. A combination of speed and stealth may just get you out of this alive. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **178**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **148**.

93

You stand your ground and demand a straight answer from Ogmil. His face is contorted with fury. 'Fool!' he spits, 'you're no different from the rest of them – thick-skulled bullies, one and all! But no longer! Finally I will receive my reward, just as master promised. And you?' Ogmil reaches into a pouch tied to his waist, 'You will soon be joining the spirits of our ancestors in the Abyss!'

With that, the apprentice flings a handful of red dust at your face. It feels as if your head has been plunged into the heart a blazing furnace. You scream in agony, blinded and wracked with awful pain. Roll one die and lose that many STAMINA points. If you are still alive, you can do nothing but lie on the ground until the agony subsides.

And, mercifully, it does. You crawl over to some water and wash the burning dust from your face. You can see again, but not very well, and it will be some time before your vision fully recovers (lose 1 point of SKILL). Now turn to **177**.

94

As the rotting giant advances, the gloomy corridor is suddenly bathed in golden light. You realise it is coming from the Halcyon Crystal, which you brandish at your undead foe. Thrandeus howls in agony as the goodness instilled in the crystal burns away at his necrotic flesh. The unholy emperor crumples to the ground, his body hissing and popping, until all that is left is a foul-smelling pool of green slime.

Now that you know the secret of the crystal, you can attempt to use its power against any opponents you may face in the future. Simply subtract 10 from the paragraph in which you face your foe. If the new paragraph you turn to makes no sense, then the crystal has no influence on them. Now turn to **200**.

95

The savage predator succumbs to your blow and does not rise again. You may hack off one of the creature's hooked foot-claws as a trophy if you wish (add the Sickle Claw to your *Adventure Sheet*). A quick inspection of the fallen boneridge confirms that it is long-dead. The valley is impassable at the northern and southern ends and gated at the others, which means that the Terrorclaw must have broken in somehow. You resolve to keep your wits about you in case more of them have gotten inside; turn to **130**.

96

Vendictus continues his tale.

'Peace returned to the land, but Celenasia was no more. Those who had witnessed the horrors of the war, such as I, remain trapped here, unable to find eternal rest. The centuries have passed slowly and painfully, with only tragic memories to keep me company.

'That was until a week or so ago, when a peculiar fellow found his way into this tomb. He was very similar in appearance to you, but lanky and possessed of an unwholesome air.'

You realise that Vendictus can only be talking about Ogmil, Valgrek's despicable apprentice!

'He seemed to know exactly what he was doing, for he went straight for the Slaver Gem and removed it from the sarcophagus of Thrandeus. The old emperor was not too pleased about that, as you can imagine!' The wizard chuckles quietly to himself.

You tell Vendictus a tale of your own, about the Rite of Banishment and of how Valgrek used the Slaver Gem, for that is undoubtedly what it was, to enslave your tribe and spirit them away. The spirit ponders your story for a moment. Suddenly his eyes light up and he raises an ethereal finger.

'Aha!' he exclaims, 'You have come to the right ghost! Being versed in the arts of magic as I am, I sought a mystic solution to the power of the Slaver Gem. I came up with this.'

Vendictus floats over to the far wall and plunges his incorporeal hands through the stone. When he pulls them back out they are clutching a magnificent crystal, shining with a golden glow.

'The Halcyon Crystal,' he proclaims proudly, 'infused with all the powers of harmony, cooperation and empathy that mankind can muster. It is not as powerful as the Slaver Gem, but it was enough to give us a chance. Yes, it was enough.'

The wizard is lost in thought once more. Eventually he realizes that you are still in the room and drops the crystal into your hands (add the Halcyon Crystal to your *Adventure Sheet*). Immediately you are filled with an inner peace, the likes of which you have never experienced before – restore 1 SKILL point, 6 STAMINA points and 2 LUCK points!

'The Halcyon Crystal was created for only one purpose – to combat the evil of the Slaver Gem. I can sense the Gem now, far to the east of the Cauldron and moving farther away with each passing moment. You must pursue it with all haste! Go in peace, brave warrior...'

With that, the spirit of Vendictus fades away. You leave the wizard's tomb, armed with the location of Valgrek and your people; add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **243**.

97

Greasy tentacles lash suddenly out of the darkness and coil themselves about your leg! Before you have time to react, a dozen more whip around you, leaving you trapped and helpless. Inexorably you are hauled towards a creature out of your deepest, darkest nightmares. A great yellow eye boils out of its slimy hide and, with its terrible gaze, blasts your sanity into oblivion. Your adventure ends here.

98

You tie one end of your rope to a nearby stalagmite and, gripping tightly on to the other end, carefully lower yourself into the hole. You have almost reached the bottom when the rope snaps! You land heavily but are unharmed.

You pick yourself up and search around in the pit but are dismayed to find nothing but a few gnawed bones – lose 1 LUCK point. Now, how will you get yourself out of the pit? If you have the codeword *Urap*, turn to **231**; otherwise remove the Rope from your *Adventure Sheet*. You can either try to jump up and catch the lip of the pit (turn to **2**), or attempt to climb out (turn to **208**).

99

Onwards you run, heart pounding, lungs burning and all thoughts focused on the line of trees ahead. With painstaking slowness they edge closer and closer - and then, finally, you are there; back out in the open plains. The grasslands have released you from their grip once at last. You listen to the frustrated howls of the Terrorclaws that were so close to catching you, but as you had hoped, they do not leave the perimeter of the grass fields.

You take a moment to catch your breath and get your bearings. You were so intent on your escape that you forgot to pay attention to which way you were going! If you are going to make it home before nightfall, there is no time to waste. Turn to **72**.

100

The naturally-formed passage spirals through the darkness, its irregular surface proving a hazard to your footing. *Test your Luck* (if you are carrying a lit torch you are automatically Lucky).

If you are Unlucky, you trip and strike your head on a spur of stone – lose 3 STAMINA points. If you are Lucky your careful navigation leads you through unharmed. The tunnel begins to narrow, forcing you to walk hunched over and then, further on, crawling on all fours. Eventually the passage shrinks to such a size that you will have to push yourself along on your belly to continue. If you wish to do so, turn to **35**. Otherwise you can return to the entrance cave and can explore the right-hand passage (turn to **6**), or descend the peak and return to the plains (turn to **237**).

101

Paru is there to help you, and your combined strength is enough to pull open the trap. You yank your foot out moments before it snaps shut again. Your ankle is badly cut and bruised, but thankfully nothing appears to be broken. Still, it is painful to walk on, and you will be limping until it starts to heal; reduce your SKILL by 1 until you return to Boneridge Village. You lean on Paru for support and together you continue on; turn to **9**.

102

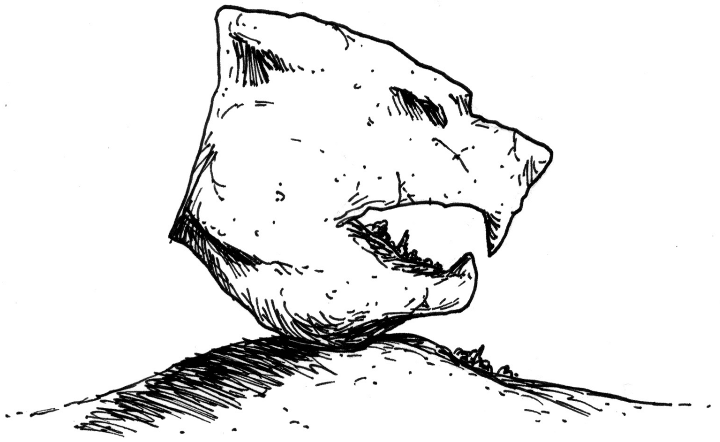
You tie one end of your rope to a nearby stalagmite and, gripping tightly on to the other end, carefully lower yourself down into the hole. The pitiful moaning renews and as you get closer you see it is coming from a thin humanoid figure crouching at the bottom of the pit. Will you attack the creature before it can harm you (turn to **221**) or take a closer look first (turn to **183**)?

103

As you get closer you notice the animal does not appear to be breathing. Perhaps it has died of natural causes? You are only a few strides away when a long tail bizarrely rises from the beast's midsection! A triangular head quickly follows it, its narrow snout filled with curved, blade-like teeth. You quickly realize both parts belong to a Terrorclaw that had previously been hidden by the Boneridge's bulk. It must have been feeding on the innards of the beast, but you have disturbed its feast and now it seeks livelier prey!

DEINONYCHUS	SKILL 7	STAMINA 6

Every time the Terrorclaw wins an Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 5 or 6, the creature slashes at you with a large, sickle-like claw on its foot, inflicting 4 STAMINA points of damage. If you win, turn to **95**.



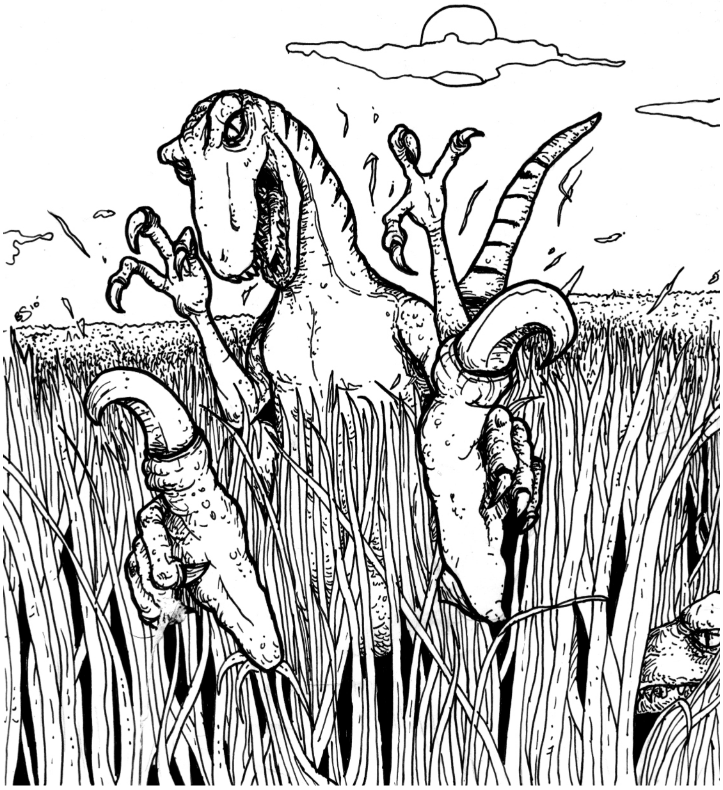
104

You return to the entrance cave, where you can follow the tunnel to the left if you haven't already done so (turn to **51**), or you can leave Oldbone Gorge altogether (turn to **170**).

105

You produce the Halcyon Crystal and hold it before the enslaved Wanushu. It pulses with golden light, its shining rays blasting away the crimson glow that infects the warrior's eyes. He shakes his head in confusion and then looks upon you with eyes that truly see you.

You quickly cut down Kuwi from the trap. She runs into her father's embrace, tears streaming down her face. Wanushu explains that he ventured to the Cauldron to hunt the beasts that lurk in the nearby swamps. He had just finished setting his last snare when he blacked out. His face darkens with anger when you explain Valgrek's treachery.



'Then we have no time to waste. Follow me!' With that he bounds off into the bushes. From now on, Wanushu will fight by your side, and you may add 2 to your Attack Strength while he accompanies you. Add the codeword *Uhsunaw* to your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to **272**.

106

You submit your offering and kneel before Courga Rock. Eyes closed, you concentrate on slowing your breathing and focus on connecting with the perilous forces of the Celestial Court. Time passes, but whether it is minutes or hours, you do not know. Eventually you begin to sense an otherworldly power. As the wind whistles past the stone you fancy you can hear a faint voice intermingled with it:

You reek of humility! Only those who burn with pride and self-righteousness will reap the rewards of life. Begone with you!

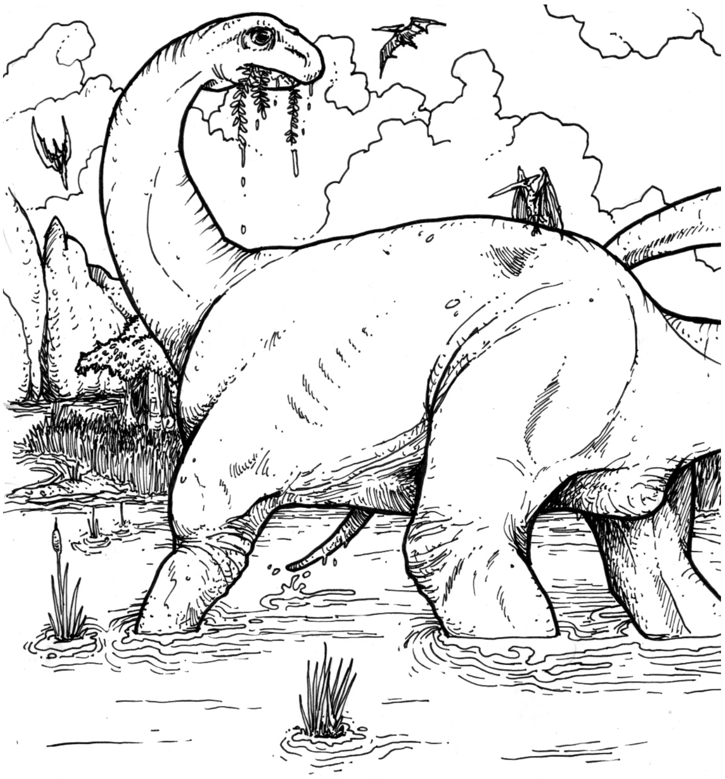
The wind dies away and the voice can no longer be heard. You leave Courga Rock, dejected by the troubling words you have heard (lose 1 LUCK point). Turn to **204**.

107

You step back to avoid your opponent's strike – into empty space! Your mind is consumed with terror as you cartwheel through the air, tumbling hundreds of metres to a messy death on the floor of Oldbone Gorge. Your adventure ends here...

108

Onwards you dash through the grass, desperately fighting the urge to panic. You are so focused on escaping your pursuers



that you almost fail to notice another Terrorclaw waiting for you in the grass ahead. Before you can arrest your momentum it lunges for you, jaws open wide and claws unsheathed. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you duck at the last second and your attacker leaps straight over the top of you! You keep running, not daring to look over your shoulder; turn to **92**. If you are Unlucky, the Terrorclaw's enormous hooked claws sink into your chest. Your adventure ends here...

109

All seems lost when another call answers from the west! Stampeding towards you is an enormous four-legged beast with a long neck and an even longer tail – the Thunder Lizard! It has refused to give up the pursuit and has caught up to you at last. Seeing your predicament, the colossal creature rushes past you and charges into the incoming Lizard Men riders, who scatter and flee at the sudden and awesome attack. You are now free to finish your battle with the Tyrant King. Continue the fight, using the Tyrannosaurus's STAMINA score that you had noted down.

TYRANNOSAURUS REX SKILL 13

Remember that each time the Tyrannosaurus Rex wins an Attack Round, you must roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, it attacks your mount (if you have one; if not, it attacks you). On a roll of 3-5 it attacks you. On a roll of 6 it attacks your companion/s (if you still have one; if not, it attacks you). The Tyrant King's massive bite inflicts 4 STAMINA points of damage on a successful attack; if your companion is attacked they will be so badly wounded that they will not be able to help you any further and you can no longer benefit from the bonus they gave to your Attack Strength.

If you win two consecutive Attack Rounds, you can attempt to strike a blow at the Slaver Gem; turn to **54**. If you manage to defeat the king of the terrible lizards, turn to **241**.

110

Before you is a vast expanse of water, stretching for many hundreds of metres to the very cliffs of the Cauldron. Wading slowly through it is the largest creature you have ever seen in your life. The colossal beast is well over twenty metres in length from its relatively small head, which sits on a long, thick neck, to its whip-like tail that stretches out far behind it. It plods ponderously through the marsh on four stocky limbs, solemnly chewing on swamp plants that trail down from its jaws like vines.

If you have both codewords *Ufes* and *Uhsunaw* written down, and Kuwi is still with you, turn to **142**. If not you think it best to give the behemoth a wide berth and hurry on your way; turn to **250**.

111

You deftly dodge the warrior's attack, grabbing the haft of the spear as it stabs into the empty space where you were standing. You yank hard on the weapon, pulling the primitive human past you and over the edge of the cliff. He tumbles silently through the air before smashing on to the rocks far below. You turn away from the spreading crimson stain and return to the junction; turn to **63**.

112

You carefully pick your way through the cave, relying on your senses of touch and hearing to make up for your lack of sight. Roll one die. If the result is 1-3, turn to **141**. If the result is 4-6, turn to **212**.

113

Paru cannot hide his excitement as you agree to his proposal. 'This is fantastic news! Let me grab my things.' He returns a short time later, a carved bone bow slung across one skinny shoulder and a quiver of arrows strapped to his back.

Paru will be able to aid you in battle by firing arrows at your opponent from a distance. He has a SKILL of 7. At the start of each Attack Round, roll two dice. If the result is equal to or less than Paru's SKILL, his arrow has found its mark: reduce your opponent's STAMINA by 2 points. If the result is greater than his SKILL, his shot has missed.

Note the codeword *Urap* on your *Adventure Sheet*. You may now speak to Wanushu (turn to **38**), Ogmil (turn to **160**), or Kuwi (turn to **144**) if you wish. Otherwise you set off on your journey; turn to **175**.

114

You throw yourself to the ground, narrowly dodging the creature's outstretched claws. Screeching in anger, the enormous beast wheels about and dives again; this time you are ready for it.

QUETZALCOATLAS SKILL 9 STAMINA 14

Because of the difficulties of fighting on the narrow ledge, you must reduce your Attack Strength by 1 for the duration of this battle. If you are victorious, you may claim the creature's egg as a trophy (add the Quetzalcoatlas Egg to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do) before climbing back down to the bottom of the gorge. You then make your way back to the cavern; turn to **12**.

115

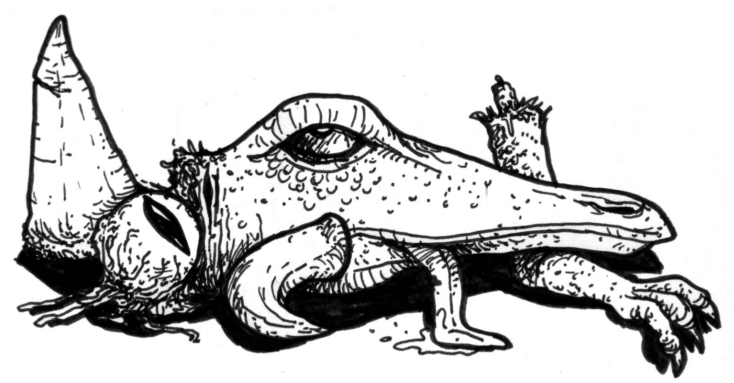
Fortunately, your foot misses the vine snare, but Kuwi's does not. It tightens about her ankle and hoists her off her feet and up into the air. At the same time, a humanoid figure bursts of the bushes, plastered with mud and wielding a fearsome battle-axe. With horror you realise that the wild-looking figure is Wanushu, your tribe's greatest warrior, second-in-command to your fallen chieftain and father of Kuwi!

She cries with happiness at the sight of her father, but they soon turn to screams when she sees his expressionless face and glowing red eyes. Wanushu stalks silently towards you, enthralled by the power of the Slaver Gem. You must defend yourself, but Kuwi cannot help you and you must fight this battle without the bonus she gives to your Attack Strength.

WANUSHU	SKILL 10	STAMINA 10

Kuwi screams at you throughout the fight, begging you not to hurt her father. Her frantic pleas make it hard to focus on the task at hand and you must reduce your Attack Strength by 1 for the duration of this battle.

If you win, Kuwi falls silent as Wanushu falls to your blows. You cut her down from the snare but she refuses to leave her father's body. You are forced to leave her behind and can no longer benefit from the bonus she gave to your Attack Strength. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **271**.



116

Leaving the steaming jungles of the Cauldron behind at last, you race across the Plain of Bones, hot on the heels of the traitors Valgrek and Ogil, and your enslaved tribe. The hours fly by as the sweat pours off your brow in the scorching sun.

Then you see it, a huge plume of dust kicked up by the passage of Valgrek's convoy. As you get closer, you can see the bone-barred cages that hold your people, dragged along behind enormous scaled beasts. At the head of the convoy rides Valgrek, mounted atop the most feared predator of all time – the Tyrant King. The conclusion of your quest is within sight, but how long as it taken you to get here?

Your DELAYS score now becomes the crucial factor. Remove 2 from the score if you have the codeword *Otnorb* on your *Adventure Sheet*. Remove 4 from the score if you have the codeword *Ekipsgnol*. If your DELAYS score is now between 0 and 3, turn to **266**. If it is between 4 and 6, turn to **263**. If it is greater than 7, turn to **62**.

117

You reach into your knapsack and pull out a trophy. Kilgar's face instantly lights up. 'What do we have here, then?' he asks excitedly. What will you offer the hunter (pick one of the trophies listed on your *Adventure Sheet*)? If you give him the Struthiomimus Skull or Pterodactyl Wing, turn to **68**. If you give him the Crocodile Teeth, Oldbone Necklace or Tattered Lion Pelt, turn to **118**. Turn to **199** if you offer Kilgar the Black Lion Pelt.

118

You present Kilgar with your trophy (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*). He holds it before him, turning it about and examining it from all angles. He scratches his beard and looks at you doubtfully. 'This is certainly an, uh, interesting item. I thank ye for it but I'm looking for something a little more, ah, impressive.'

With the help of his aides, Kilgar mounts his camel. 'Let's keep looking Iskander; this run of bad luck can't last forever. Send this poor native on his way.' The guide shoos you away as the camel train sets off. Lose 1 point from your LUCK score and turn to **47**.

119

You spot a dark opening, partially hidden by a large boulder. You carefully climb down to it and peek inside but can see nothing. You squeeze past the enormous rock and are almost inside when you hear a sinister rattling sound. You start backing out of the cave but, before you can free yourself, the GIANT RATTLESNAKE strikes, sinking its dagger-like fangs into your arm! Lose 4 STAMINA points. If you are still alive, you flee to safety and inspect your wound. Your folk are hardy and over the centuries have developed a resistance to the many poisonous creatures that inhabit the plains, so you will survive the attack. Nevertheless you are left feeling very sick, and it is some time before you can continue. When you are ready, will you keep looking for the village entrance (turn to **18**), or climb back down to the plains and leave the ridges behind (turn to **214**)?

120

The fire picks up in ferocity and sweeps towards you with surprising speed. You are starting to believe you have made a fatal choice when the wind mercifully changes direction, pushing the flames away. Soon you find the end of its main front and dash homewards across the scorched plains. Night will fall soon, and the Rite of Judgement is near at hand! Turn to **48**.

121

The monotonous wall of grass temporarily gives way to a wide plain covered in short scrub. A short distance away you spot a herd of antelope grazing on the shorter grass. An antelope won't make much of a trophy, but it will make for good eating. You ready your dagger and line up your shot on the nearest beast. *Test your Luck*! If you are Lucky, turn to **189**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **57**.

122

By chance you find a twisting passage that leads you back to the entrance cave. You decide to leave the gloomy peak behind and return to the more familiar surroundings of the open plains; turn to **237**.

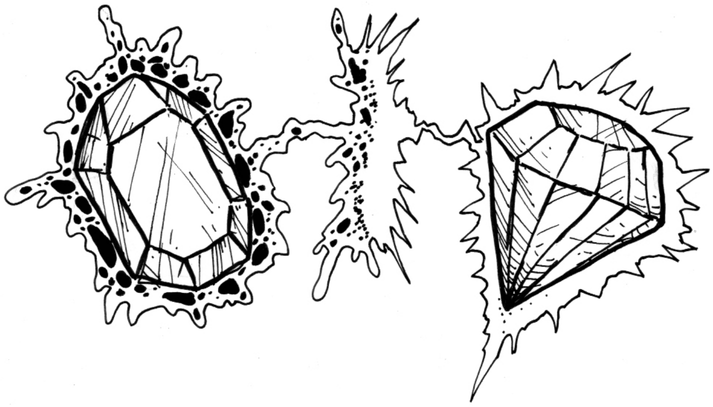
123

The pit is quite wide and deep enough that you wouldn't be able to climb back out of it. The floor is covered with dried pools of crusted gore and splinters of fleshless bone. Will you drop down into the pit (turn to **20**), explore the far end of the gorge (turn to **228**), or return to the cavern (turn to **12**)?

124

You have achieved the impossible and slain the Dragon! Restore 2 LUCK points for overcoming such an awesome foe. After taking a moment to recover your strength (and collect your weapon if you lost it) you set to work on cutting out a worthy trophy from your fallen foe (add the Dragon's Eye to your *Adventure Sheet*).

As you are about to leave, you notice the glint of metal. A pile of coins and trinkets lies trapped beneath the heavy bulk of the creature. It is the treasure hoard that the Dragon has accumulated over the years from countless victims. Nothing in the pile is of any use to you except for a shining blade of exotic design. Although you have little experience in wielding such a weapon, some intuition compels you take it with you (add the Shining Sword to your *Adventure Sheet* if you decide to take it with you, and note that it is a magic weapon). Your torch is beginning to sputter out, so you set to work on looking for a way out; turn to **122**.



125

You continue battling through the thick grass but are brought to a halt when you spot a yellow orb split with a black vertical stripe floating a short distance in front of you. You quickly realize that it is an eye and that is belongs to a Terrorclaw, a feared bipedal predator armed with savage sickle-like hind claws. The carnivore appears unfazed by your sudden appearance; it stands calmly before you, one bird-like eye locked on you at all times.

You recall that Terrorclaws are pack hunters and that there is a good chance more of its kind is nearby. You also remember that the creatures are extremely fast sprinters, preferring to chase down their prey from behind and tear them apart with their hooked claws. Will you stand your ground and try to scare the beast away (turn to **5**), or will you make a run and for it and try to lose it in the tall grass (turn to **43**)?

126

You find yourself battling through a huge bed of reeds that tower up over your head. They are packed densely together, and it is tiring work hacking a path through them. Eventually you reach a small clearing and stop to rest. You must consume 1 of your Provisions to regain your strength (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*, but only restore 2 STAMINA points). If you cannot or will not eat you must lose 2 STAMINA points.

As you are enjoying your break, a squat, green-skinned monster bursts out of the reeds. The beast is almost four metres in length, and has a spectacular sail running down its back to a large tail. Attracted by your scent, the creature scuttles towards you on four side-sprawling legs and attacks.

DIMETRODON SKILL 10 STAMINA 10

If you are victorious, you decide to leave the area in case more of the creatures show up; turn to **110**.

127

Summoning up your remaining reserves of strength, you pull on the jaws of the trap as hard as you can. At first it will not budge but then, inch by inch, it begins to yield. Sweat pours down your face with the exertion, but soon the trap is opened wide enough for you to slip your foot free. Your ankle is badly cut and bruised, but thankfully nothing appears to be broken. Still, it is painful to walk on, and you will be limping until it starts to heal; reduce your SKILL by 1 until you return to Boneridge Village. Turn to **9**.

128

You journey the length of the gully until it opens up onto a granite promontory that looks out across the plains. To the north the land continues to climb into a pointed peak of dark stone. Halfway up the mountain you can see the shadowy mouth of a cave. To the east the land drops back down to the rolling grasslands that will eventually lead you back to Boneridge Village. If you wish to explore the cave, turn to **40**. If you wish to return to the plains, turn to **237**.

129

You let Kuwi's story sink in. Using some evil stone, Valgrek has enslaved both your people and the rival Oldbone tribe - but for what purpose? Ogmil must be in league with the traitorous shaman, for he did not appear to be under the thrall of the mysterious gem.

Your course of action is now clear. You must rescue your people from whatever foul fate Valgrek has planned for them. Unfortunately, you have no clues as to where they have been taken, but Kuwi has an idea.

'Whenever I have questions that need answering I pray to our ancestors for guidance. They are wise beyond knowing and must be able to help us. Follow me.'

Kuwi leads you to a large, forbidding tent made from the black hide of some thick-skinned beast. It is Valgrek's lair, a place you have always been forbidden from entering. Apprehensively you part the entrance and step inside.

The tent is brimming with countless oddities and esoteric devices. In one corner the severed claws of some nameless horror lie beside the carved stone figure of a tentacled god. In another corner a basket of sweet-smelling herbs lies atop of a stack of bundled parchments – indecipherable writings from some far-flung corner of the world. A large area of the tent's hide is covered with a map of the Plain of Bones, scrawled by Valgrek with charcoal and covered with his mysterious notations.

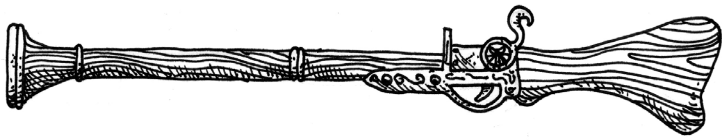
In the centre of this arcane assemblage stands a stone altar. It is here that the shaman came to seek divine guidance from the spirits of your long-dead chieftains. Now it is your turn to seek answers from the shades of your forefathers.

‘First you must prove yourself worthy of an audience with the spirits,’ Kuwi says, ‘place your offerings on the altar and pray that the ancestors are pleased by them.’

During the Rite of Banishment you will have gathered various trophies from the creatures you have slain. Consult the table below to see what value the spirits place on the trophies you have collected:

Crocodile Teeth	1	Lizard Man Scimitar	1
Oldbone Necklace	1	Neanderthal Spear	1
Sickle Claw	2	Bulls’ Horn	2
Aardwolf Skin	2	Nandibear Claw	2
Struthiomimus Skull	2	Pterodactyl Wing	2
Allosaurus Tooth	3	Black Lion Pelt	3
Quetzalcoatlas Egg	4	Fangthane Gold	4
Chieftain’s Crown	5	Dragons’ Eye	7

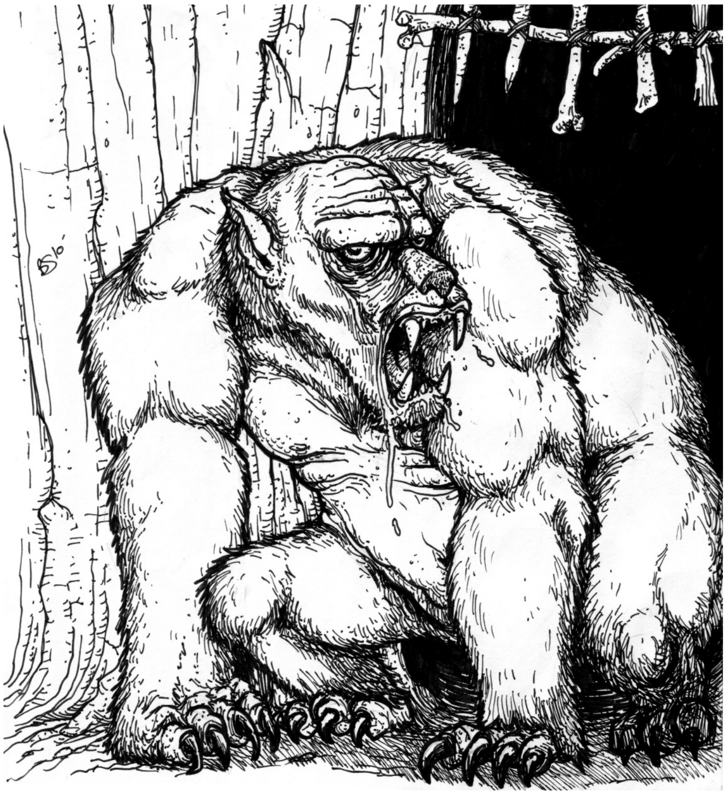
If you have collected the Tattered Lion’s Pelt as a trophy, turn immediately to **79**. Tally up the values of each trophy you have collected to get your total. Now roll two dice; if the result is less than or equal to the total of the trophies, turn to **22**. If the result is greater than the total of your trophies, turn to **273**.



130

You continue picking your way through the herd of Boneridges, making for the western side of the valley. Your thoughts turn to the quest before you, wondering what each of the other candidates have planned, and if the trophy you will eventually bring back to camp will be judged worthy enough. You are up against some experienced hunters, and in the end there can be only one victor...

You are so caught up in your thoughts that you fail to look where you are going and smack face-first into the leathery bulk of an adult Boneridge! The startled beast snorts in surprise and lumbers around to face you. It is a male bull and, judging by its size and surly disposition, must be the leader of the herd. Stamping angrily at the ground, it lowers its massive head until its single horn is pointing directly at you. Then, with an earth-shaking bellow, the Boneridge charges! You have a split-second to decide which direction to flee in: north (turn to **11**), or west (turn to **152**)!



131

A length of rope hangs down beside the portcullis. You grab hold and pull. Inch by inch, the heavy gate begins to rise. You have nearly hauled the portcullis all the way open when a terrifying bellow sounds from the cave beyond. Immediately you let go of the rope, but you are too late to prevent the ferocious NANDIBEAR from escaping its prison. The hairy beast rears up on its stout hind legs and lumbers towards you, its ape-like face dominated by a mouth brimming with fangs. Starved to the brink of insanity, the Nandibear attacks!

NANDIBEAR SKILL 8 STAMINA 11

If you are victorious, you may claim a trophy (add the Nandibear Claw to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do) before inspecting the beast’s lair (turn to **191**). Otherwise, if you haven’t already done so, you can try to open the other portcullis (turn to **209**).

132

You hurry south; knowing that time is of the essence. Valgrek and his captives have quite a head start on you and any delay on your part could see your people lost forever. From now on any choice you make that slows you down will add to your DELAYS score.

The further you travel south, the greener the scenery gets; dry, barren dirt turns to lush, grass-covered plains sprinkled with clumps of shrubs and spindly, leafy trees.

By mid-morning you reach the pile of stones that marks the southernmost border of Boneridge territory. Beyond this point lies the forbidden land that leads to the Cauldron. For the first time ever, you step beyond the marker, into a realm of ghosts and ancient evils.

Eventually you come across a vast clearing in the middle of the grasslands. The sandy ground is carpeted with bones of all shapes and sizes. Will you cut directly across the clearing (turn to **81**) or take the time to skirt around it (turn to **267**)?

133

You veer away from the forbidding ruin and make for a long, rocky ridge that stretches along the horizon. As you are walking you detect the smallest of tremors beneath your feet. You stop to listen; the vibrations continue to increase in intensity and are soon accompanied by a low rumbling, like that of distant thunder. Then you see them: a pair of leathery beasts galloping towards you from the west, trailing huge plumes of dust. On the backs of the four-legged creatures are humanoid figures, but you cannot make out any details from this far away except for the gleam of metal.

It is possible they have not yet noticed you. There is still time to return to the ruin and take refuge (turn to **192**). If you wish to face the approaching riders, turn to **82**.

134

You drag away the weights and then slide the latticed lid away from the hole. Before you can react a thick, glistening tentacle lashes out of the pit and whips itself around your neck! You must fight to free yourself before you are dragged to your doom.

TENTACLED HORROR	SKILL 8	STAMINA 5

If you are still fighting your opponent after four Attack Rounds, turn to **227**. Otherwise you manage to break free of the rubbery tentacle. You flee the cavern as more tentacles emerge from the hole. Add the codeword *Elcatnet* to your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to **46**.

135

You listen carefully but cannot detect any sounds coming from the holes. Will you look in the hole on the left (turn to **26**), the one in the middle (turn to **134**), or the one on the right (turn to **180**)?

136

You finally reach the western edge of the valley, which is normally secured with a large gate made of tusks and bones strapped together with leather bindings. The gate is shattered, however, as if something of immense size had barrelled straight through it. Dozens of Boneridges have already wandered out of the valley and onto the plains beyond. Of the gate guards there is no sign. You make a mental note to report the breach when you return to the village. For now, you leave the valley and make for the tall grasslands in the distance.

You know from past experience that to the north-west the grasslands eventually give way to the rocky steppes in which the degenerate Oldbone tribe dwells. To the west the tall grass continues nearly all the way to the far-off jungle. In which direction will you venture: north-west (turn to **49**), or west (turn to **207**)?

137

The larger gate is a portcullis that can only be moved up and down. A length of rope hangs down to one side; you pull on this and, with considerable effort, are able to move the portcullis up high enough to be able to fit through the opening. You squeeze through just as the heavy gate rolls back into position. Turn to **20**.

138

The tunnel descends in a gentle curve, following the contours of the gorge outside. Numerous small caves branch off from the main path, but they appear to be sleeping quarters and contain nothing of use. Eventually the tunnel ends at a junction. To the left, the tunnel is bathed in a bright warm glow. To the right, it disappears into darkness. The tunnel ahead descends sharply. Which way will you go?

Left?	Turn to **206**.
Right?	Turn to **218**.
Straight ahead?	Turn to **41**.

Alternatively you can return to the entrance cave (turn to **104**).

139

You swipe at the approaching ghost with your weapon, but it simply passes through its shimmering form. 'Fool!' hisses the spectral wizard, 'Your rashness has condemned your soul and those of your people to eternal torment!'

Muttering arcane words, the spirit points a crooked finger at you. A blast of invisible energy strikes you in the chest, propelling you out of the chamber and into one of the strangely carved stone pillars – lose 3 STAMINA points. If you are still alive, the door to the wizard's tomb slams shut with a deafening crack. Try as you might, you cannot reopen it. Lose 1 LUCK point and turn to 243.

140

Your aim is true. The flint-tip dagger skewers the antelope straight through the neck, causing it to quickly bleed out and die. The rest of the herd scatters into the grass in bounding leaps. As you recover your weapon, you hear a chorus of low growls coming from behind you. You turn and are confronted with four strange creatures with the top halves of men but the bottom halves of lions – FELINAURS! Each carries a wooden short bow and has an arrow trained on your heart.

'These are our hunting grounds, human,' snarls their leader, 'and that was our kill! We demand recompense!'

You entertain attacking them, but realise that their arrows would cut you down before you could reach them. You will have to bargain your way out of this! If you have a Sickle Claw, Bull's Horn or Aardwolf Skin among your possessions, you can offer one of them to the Felinaur leader (turn to **85**). If you cannot, or will not, you will have to give up two of your provisions (mark them off your *Adventure Sheet*); turn to **156**.

141

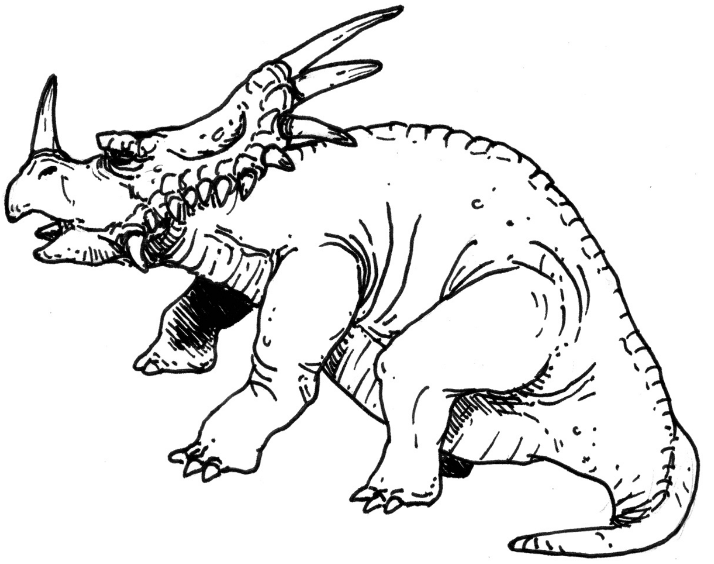
You successfully navigate your way to the opposite end of the cave, unknowingly avoiding a deep chasm that would have been the end of you had you stepped into it. If you possess a torch and have still not lit it, you can do so now (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so). The cave narrows to another tunnel before opening up into a much larger chamber, turn to **202**.

142

Wanushu's eyes gleam as he beholds the titanic beast. 'The great Thunder Lizard, thought to be only a legend amongst our people. It is said that his very footsteps shake the rain and lightning from the sky. We must hunt it!'

The rest of you are appalled at Wanushu's suggestion, but the warrior will not be swayed. 'This is a sign from our ancestors, I am sure of it. They have gifted us with the greatest quarry of all; we would be fools to ignore it!' Wanushu suggests you try using the Halycon Crystal on the beast. 'It broke the hold that Valgrek had over me; perhaps it has other powers?'

Kuwi and Sefu remain unconvinced, but will follow any decision you make. Will you agree to Wanushu's wild request to try and capture the mighty beast (turn to **244**), or will you stick to your mission and press onwards (turn to **250**)?



143

The two titans battle back and forth, snapping and lunging at each other, but neither is able to gain an advantage. Then the carnivore sneaks its long, narrow jaws past the heavily armoured head of its opponent and clamps them down on the Threehorn's exposed neck. The sturdy herbivore thrashes its head about in an attempt to free itself but cannot break loose of the carnivore's vice-like grip. Panicking, the Threehorn drags itself and its attacker towards you and the cliff's edge.

Unable to escape, you watch on in dismay as the two giant beasts stagger towards you. The Threehorn continues to retreat until it has joined you on the very lip of the sheer cliffs. Then, with one more step, the beast steps into empty space. Scrabbling for purchase, the Threehorn begins to slip over the edge of the cliff, pulling the carnivore with it. All you can do is throw yourself to the ground and hope for the best. *Test your Luck*; if you are Lucky, turn to **205**. If you are Unlucky, the battling monsters barrel into you, taking you over the cliff with them to your death. Your adventure ends here.

144

Around the same age as you and Paru, Kuwi is widely acknowledged as the most beautiful woman in the village. No one has dared to court her, however, due to her fiercely protective father, the warrior Wanushu! You find her standing amongst the other women who have gathered to see off the candidates.

'You don't appear to be in much of a hurry,' she teases, 'are you that confident of success?' You ask if she has any advice for you.

'Father used to tell me a story when I was younger, about a terrible lizard that lives in the black mountain beyond the northern plains. Supposedly it is a fearsome creature with wings so vast they blot out the sun. If such a monster exists, it would surely yield the mightiest of trophies.'

You thank her and go to leave, but as you do she tugs on your arm. 'Hurry back,' she whispers, 'I don't feel safe with all the hunters gone.' You reassure her of a speedy return, then head out of the village. Turn to **175**.

145

The wildfire seems less ferocious to the left. Herds of Antelope and lumbering Shinglebacks flee from the flames that are quickly consuming their grazing grounds. Among the terrified beasts you spot a SABRE-TOOTHED TIGER, a fabled feline predator with two dagger-like fangs. The pelt of such a creature would make an impressive trophy and could perhaps be enough to earn you the position of chieftain! Will you attack it as it passes by (turn to **186**), or leave it be and instead focus on escaping the fire (turn to **120**)?

146

You skid down the steep slope as fast as you are able, feet threatening to slide out from under you on the loose stones. It is at that moment that your right foot snags on a jagged rock, sending you tumbling forward. *Test your Skill*; if you are successful, turn to **88**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **15**.

147

The cold wind whistles past you as you plunge into the darkness. Several awful moments pass before you crash into the hard, stone-flagged floor of the tower. Roll one die, add 2 to the result and lose that many STAMINA points. If you are still alive, you stagger to your feet and get your bearings. If you were carrying a lit torch it is now lost to you, but you may light another one if you have one (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so). Now turn to **19**.

148

Your thoughts of escape are premature. A single Terrorclaw stands before you, much larger and fiercer than the others and covered in terrible scars. Your only hope is to slay the beast, and quickly, for the rest of the pack is hot on your trail!

DEINONYCHUS SKILL 9 STAMINA 9

If you defeat your opponent within four Attack Rounds or less, turn to **178**. If you take longer than this, your efforts are to no avail. The rest of the Terrorclaws pick up your trail again and swiftly surround you. With a sigh of resignation you ready your weapon and prepare for the end. Your adventure ends here...

149

You approach the water's edge, spooking a group of scaly, ostrich-like creatures that scatter before you. You kneel down, and scoop a handful of cool water to your mouth and drink deeply; restore 1 STAMINA point. Roll one die. If you roll a 3 or a 5, turn to **77**. Otherwise you drink your fill and set off once more. Evening is approaching, and it will soon be time to seek shelter for the night. Turn to **61**

150

You nestle down into a small dip in the ground and drift off to sleep. You are woken a few times during the night by the howls of nocturnal creatures, but fortunately no harm comes to you. As the morning sun rises over the plains, you must eat a meal or lose 3 STAMINA points. Once you have eaten and stretched out the kinks you continue; turn to **226**.

151

You approach the inviting pool, eager for a drink from its cool waters. The young Shingleback notices you and emits a panicked squeal. Almost immediately a chorus of similar calls, but ones much deeper and far more troubling, answers it. A pair of adult Shinglebacks, each around nine metres long, appear nearby. They thunder through the woods towards you, smashing aside fully-grown trees as if they were mere twigs. One attends to the distressed baby while the other charges you, trumpeting furiously and swinging a massive tail lined with spikes as long as your legs! Will you face the over-protective parent (turn to **90**), or turn tail and flee for your life (turn to **24**)?

152

You flee towards the other end of Boneridge Valley, the thunderous beats of the bull's charge threatening to knock you off balance with every step. The western gates – and safety – are still some distance away, but already you are tiring from your exertions. Do you have the endurance to outlast your opponent? Roll three dice and *Test your Stamina*. If you are successful, the Boneridge runs out of steam before you do; it breaks off its charge while you make good your escape; turn to **136**. If you are unsuccessful, you do not have the strength to keep running; your legs buckle beneath you and you stagger to a halt. You must fight; turn to **69**.

153

A horn blasts in the distance behind you to the east. You turn to face a veritable battalion of Lizard Men charging towards you, each mounted on a lumbering, spiky beast. The buyers that Valgrek was going to sell your enslaved people to have arrived to claim their goods! You do not have long before they are upon you. If you have the codeword *Deyaled*, turn to **109**. If not, there is nothing you can do as the Lizard Men surround you and cut you to pieces. Your adventure ends here.

154

You are not as strong as you thought, and it takes you many attempts before you manage to climb out. When you finally escape, you return up the tunnel and leave the Oldbone village. How much time have you wasted? If you failed only one roll, a little time has passed but you can't afford to waste any more time here; turn to **170**. If you failed two rolls, the day is growing late and you must return to Boneridge village immediately; turn to **214**. If you failed all three rolls, night has fallen and you have failed to return to the village in time for the judging ceremony. Sadly, your adventure ends here.

155

You carefully approach the end of tunnel and look out on Oldbone Gorge, home of your hated rivals. Below you, sheer cliffs drop hundreds of metres down to the boulder-strewn floor of the gorge, where some kind of walled arena has been erected. Above you, the granite walls stretch up to the rim of the gorge and the cloudless azure sky.

You turn away from the opening and come face to face with an Oldbone warrior! He stands before you, shaggy-haired and heavy-browed, and clad in grimy animal skins. He holds a spear in his meaty hands, which he thrusts towards you. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **111**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **107**.

156

You remove the food from your pack (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*) and place it before the Felinaurs. 'A poor substitute for fresh meat,' their leader snarls. They take your food nevertheless and let you leave the clearing unharmed. Turn to **89**.

157

Two more stone doors are set into the back wall of the crypt but, unlike the entrance to this chamber, they are much smaller and each has an iron ring bolted into its surface. Also affixed to each door is a brass nameplate – the one on the left reads 'Andilicus – King's Physician,' while the one of the right reads 'Vendictus – Court Sorcerer.' Will you:

Open the door on the left?	Turn to **247**.
Open the door on the right?	Turn to **262**.
Investigate the tomb (if you haven't already done so)?	Turn to **249**.
Leave the chamber and explore the empty doorways at the end of the passage?	Turn to **246**.

158

Now, if you haven't already done so, you can look in the central hole (turn to **134**), or the hole on the left (turn to 26). Alternatively you can leave the cavern and return to the entrance chamber (turn to **46**).

159

The Halcyon Crystal cannot exert its influence this close to the Slaver Gem, and the Tyrant King is unaffected. Return to **169** and continue your fight.

160

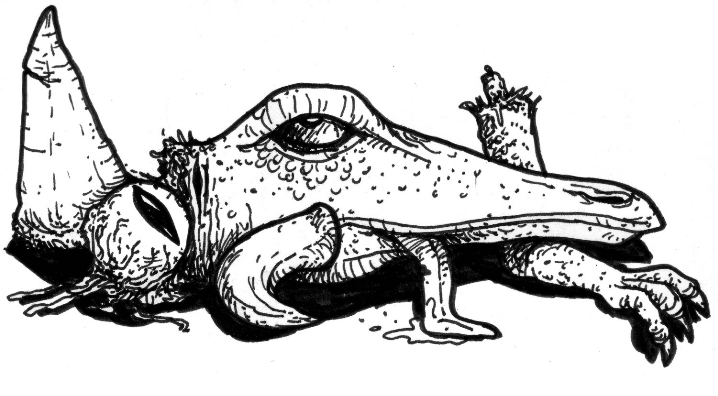
Ogmil is a few years older than you and has been training to succeed Valgrek as tribal shaman for years now. A childhood accident lamed one of his legs, preventing him from ever becoming a warrior or hunter like the other men. You find him lurking near his tent, keeping one eye on the departing candidates and the other fixated on the womenfolk who are seeing them off. He flinches slightly as your approach.

'I don't have the time to chat. Master Valgrek requires me for an important ritual.'

He makes to leave but you quickly ask him if he has any advice. He pauses, and then turns back to you. 'I consulted with the ancestors last night and asked them for an omen. They spoke only of death and despair, a fate I fear awaits many of the candidates this day.'

The apprentice's grim words fill you with dread; lose 1 LUCK point. Ogmil's gaze involuntarily sweeps across the women, lingering on the young and attractive Kuwi. 'Do not worry yourself, I will look after things in your absence.'

Smiling a crooked grin, Ogmil turns and limps away. You may still talk to Kuwi (turn to **144**), or you can leave the village (turn to **175**).



161

As you near the throne, the chieftain's eyes suddenly blaze with a fiery red glow and a tremor runs through his body. Slowly, stiffly, he rises from his throne and staggers towards you, spear gripped tightly in his hands. Although he faces you, the chieftain does not appear to see you; his glowing eyes stare into nothingness. Nevertheless, some evil influence is guiding his actions, and you must defend yourself.

NEANDERTHAL KING SKILL 10 STAMINA 10

If you survive, restore 1 LUCK point for defeating the mortal enemy of your people. As the life drains out of the Oldbone Chieftain, so too does the crimson glow fade from his eyes. In his final moments he almost appears to regain some awareness of his situation. For the first time he truly sees you. He gazes back with pure hatred in his eyes.

'So he sends you to end it,' he spits between clenched teeth, 'He takes people, leaving only worthless stones. You too will become a slave... in the... end...'

With that the chieftain dies. If you want to you may take his crown of bone as a trophy (add the Chieftain's Crown to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so). There is nothing else of interest in the hall so you decide to leave. As you turn to go you notice a pile of gems and bone carvings heaped before the throne, gleaming dully. Unease ripples through you as you recognise the craft of your own people. Turn to **63**.

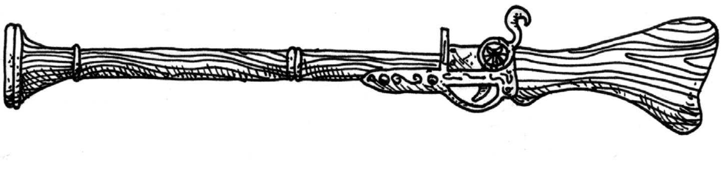
162

You clamber up the side of the granite rock face, its cracked surface providing plentiful handholds. At the top of the hill you find a pool of water that has collected in a shallow depression in the rock. A circle of trees, more robust-looking than the others you have seen in the area, rings the pool.

You dip down and scoop up a mouthful of the water. It tastes cool and delicious. You are in the process of topping up your supply of water when you hear the sounds of an approaching creature. You draw your weapon and prepare to face your visitor. Roll one die to see what you encounter:

ROLL	RESULT
1	The tawny hide of a LION (SKILL 6, STAMINA 7) appears from behind a rocky outcrop. It is a male, and one that has seen better days. Its ribs are exposed and its mane is patchy and tangled. Obviously starving, it rushes towards you, jaws slavering. You must kill it to survive! If you are victorious you may take the time to skin the lion for its ragged hide if you wish (add the Tattered Lion Pelt to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so).
2-3	A mother Antelope and its young peer round a rock. As soon as they spot you they bound off in the opposite direction, down the hill and away across the plains. You are able to finish collecting your water in peace.
4-5	A long-legged, scaly-skinned creature crests the hill, its long, narrow head sniffing the air suspiciously. It is one of the egg-thieves, a man-high scavenger that uses its grasping claws to steal the eggs of other animals. If you do nothing it will pause to nervously lap at the water, one eye fixed on you at all times, before leaving. If you choose to attack, the creature will defend itself (SKILL 7, STAMINA 5). If you slay the beast, you may claim its head as a trophy (add the Struthiomimus Skull to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so).
6	The flapping of wings fills the air. You look up just in time to avoid the outstretched claws of a leathery winged beast! Squawking in annoyance, the large flying reptile wheels about and swoops down once more. This time you are ready! Fight the creature (SKILL 7, STAMINA 9); if you survive, you may lop off one of its wings as a trophy (add the Pterodactyl Wing to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so).

Having survived your encounter, you descend the hill and continue on your way, turn to **173**.



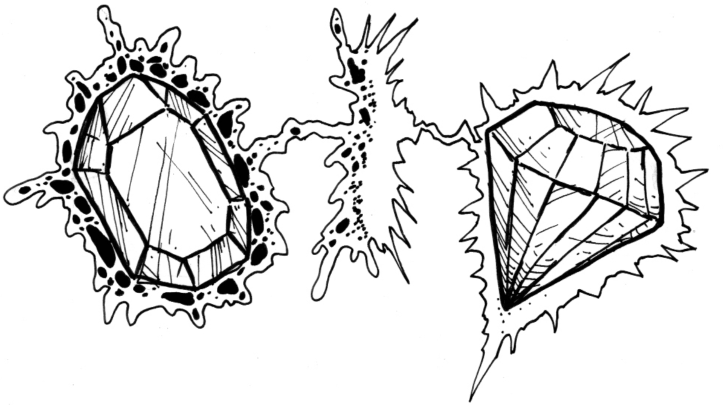
163

You haul away more rocks, but as the pile shrinks, your headache seems to increase (lose another STAMINA point). Finally, there is only one heavy stone slab left to shift. If you are carrying a lit torch, turn to **74**. Otherwise you drag aside the rock, revealing another fissure, but one much larger than the others in the cave. Resting across the crack is a bronze talisman cast in the shape of an arrow, which you take. Add the Talisman of Agility to your *Adventure Sheet*. If you ever have to *Test your Skill* in the future you can choose to draw upon the magic instilled in the talisman and automatically pass the test. You may do this once and once only, after which the talisman becomes useless.

By now your headache has reached crippling proportions and you are overcome by a wave of dizziness. You stagger out of the chamber on unsteady feet (reduce your SKILL by 1 point until you find your way out of the mountain). Now turn to **28**.

164

If the remaining two Terrorclaws are concerned at the slaying of their companions, they do not show it. One of them lifts its narrow head in the air and gives three short, sharp barks. Almost instantly it is echoed by a cacophony of answering calls that seem to come from all around you. Your heart sinks into your chest as you realize that you are completely surrounded. There is no hope of escape, and your adventure ends here.



165

Where will you take your search now? You may only visit an area you haven't already been to. Will it be:

The leaning tower?	Turn to **8**.
The columned building?	Turn to **235**.
The dark opening?	Turn to **16**.

166

It is easy to climb up to the ledge, and you reach it quickly. It is indeed a nest, and quite a large one at that. A single yellow egg sits in its centre, as large as your head and speckled with brown dots. The grisly remains of some unfortunate tribesman lay strewn about it. Suddenly, the sunlight is blotted out from above by a massive shadow passing overhead. You look up and face two huge, taloned claws lunging towards you. They belong to an enormous winged reptile with a long, narrow beak and a short, bony crest on its head. Mother is home – and she is not happy! *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **114**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **257**.

167

You leave the thorntrees behind you having suffered only a few minor scratches. The woods thin out and give way to lush green grasslands. In the distance you spot the glint of sunlight upon water. Turn to **219**.

168

The moment you step into the clearing, the three Aardwolf pups yelp in fright and begin to flee into the tall grass. You lunge at them with your arms outstretched and manage to snag one around its hind legs. It gives a squeaky growl and tries to nip at your hand. Before you can pull it closer, a louder, far deeper growl sounds from behind you. You release your grip on the little pup and turn to face its mother, who is none too pleased! The adult Giant Aardwolf snarls in anger and leaps to the defence of its children. You must defend yourself!

First GIANT AARDWOLF SKILL 7 STAMINA 7

Unless you can defeat your opponent in three rounds or less, two more Giant Aardwolves will appear, drawn by the sounds of battle and the cries of their young. You are able to position yourself in the clearing so that you can face the animals one at a time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
Second GIANT AARDWOLF	6	7
Third GIANT AARDWOLF	7	5

You can flee the battle at any time; the Giant Aardwolves will not pursue, but one will nip your leg as you vanish into the grass; lose 2 STAMINA points and turn to **207**. If you defeat all your opponents, you may take the time to skin one of the animals for its fur, which is streaked with irregular black stripes that the pups will develop as they grow older (add the Aardwolf Skin to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do so). You decide against stealing one of the young and leave them to the care of the rest of the pack that will no doubt arrive soon. Turn to **121**.

169

Valgrek, seated securely in his harness and clutching the Slaver Gem in his grasp, orders his terrible mount to attack. The evil artefact pulses with the same fell light that emanates from the creature's eyes. If you can get your hands on the Gem, you may be able to undo its magic. Armed with this knowledge, you prepare to fight for your life!

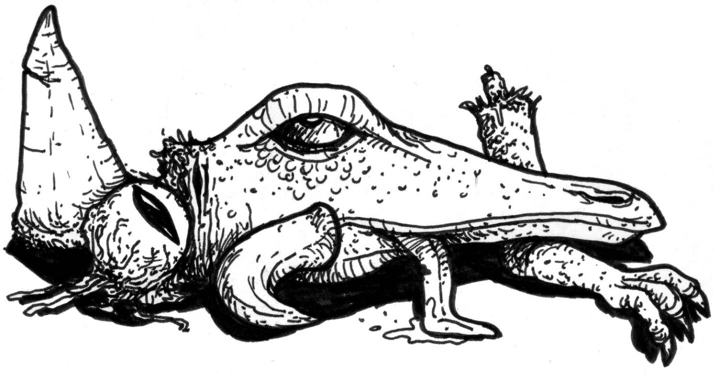
TYRANNOSAURUS REX SKILL 13 STAMINA 25

If you are mounted on either Longspike or the Thunder Lizard, it will aid you in your battle, as will your companions. Each time the Tyrannosaurus Rex wins an Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, it attacks your mount (if you have one; if not, it attacks you). On a roll of 3-5 it attacks you. On a roll of 6 it attacks your companion/s (if you still have one; if not, it attacks you). The Tyrant King's massive bite inflicts 4 STAMINA points of damage on a successful attack; if your companion is attacked they will be so badly wounded that they will not be able to help you any further and you can no longer benefit from the bonus they gave to your Attack Strength. Every second Attack Round Valgrek will blast you with chilling bolts of dark energy; lose 2 STAMINA points each time, whether you win the Attack Round or not.

If you win two consecutive Attack Rounds you can attempt to strike a blow at the Slaver Gem; turn to **54**. After six Attack Rounds have passed, make a note of how much STAMINA the Tyrannosaurus still has and turn to **153**.

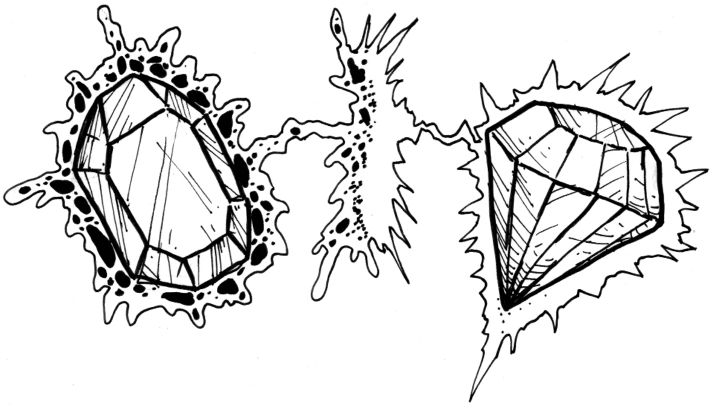
170

You decide against re-entering the deserted Oldbone warrens. You can either strike out north-east along the spine of the ridge (turn to **39**), or return to the plains and begin the homeward journey (turn to **214**).



171

You head south, further into the heart of the vast grasslands and closer to the fringes of the jungles of Silur Cha, empire of the wicked Lizard Men. For hours you trudge through an unchanging landscape of grass that seems to be growing ever taller, now stretching many feet above your head to the cloudless sky. Around midday you come across a trail of sorts, as if the passage of some large creature had flattened a path through the grass fields. The trail leads to the south and east. Do you want to follow this (turn to **17**), or will you continue beating your own path southwards (turn to **125**).

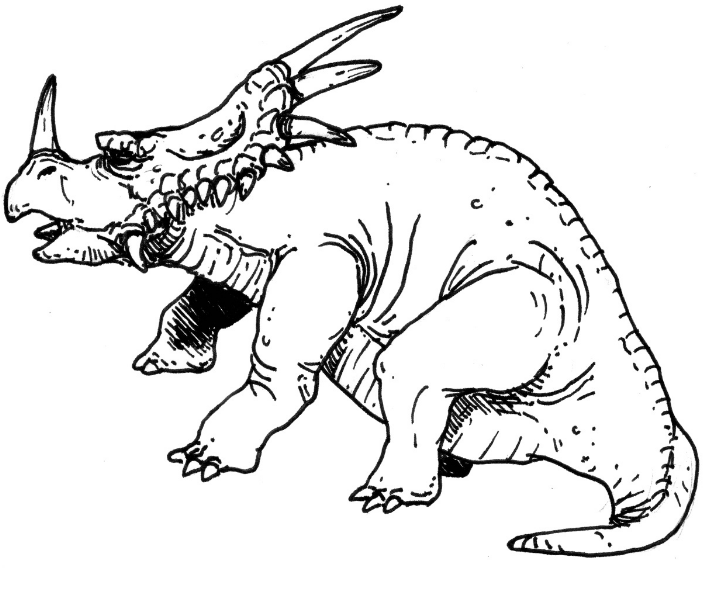


172

You tiptoe towards the slumbering beast, weapon at the ready. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **83**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **27**.

173

The afternoon finds you trudging northwards, the granite-studded wilderness having given way to gently undulating steppes. In the distance you spot a single horse pulling a covered wagon. You cannot tell who or what may be driving it, but it is headed west across your path. Will you investigate (turn to **223**), or give the wagon a wide berth and continue on your way (turn to **61**)?



174

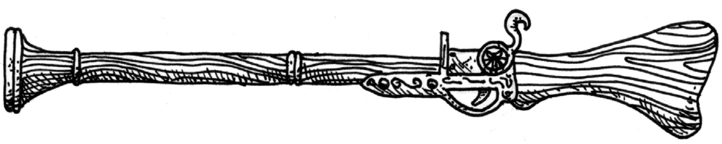
As you approach, you see that the people are human, but the swathes of loose cloth they wear wrapped around them suggest they are not from around here. A large, carved, wooden throne is strapped to the head camel; the rest appear to carry foodstuffs and equipment. 'Hey there! Look, Iskander, a native!'

One of the humans points towards you. He is shorter and stouter than the others, with pinkish skin and a huge bushy beard. He too wears cloth robes, but he seems none too comfortable in them; a strange staff made of metal and wood is cradled in one arm. At his side stand three others, two of them are fanning him with large palm fronds. The other holds a rolled up sheet of leather.

The little man jogs over to you, his attendants quickly rushing after him. He extends a hand towards you. 'Greetings, gentle native! My name is Kilgar Ironlegs of the great city of Vynheim. I have ventured to the savage south in order to bag myself a beast of legend to show the clan back home. But as yet I have found nothing but ill-fortune – swarms of biting insects, thieving cave-dwellers and this blasted, interminable heat! By the great Earth-mother I've never sweated so much in all my life! I am starting to think Iskander here has led me astray.' The attendant carrying the scroll raises an eyebrow in silent protest.

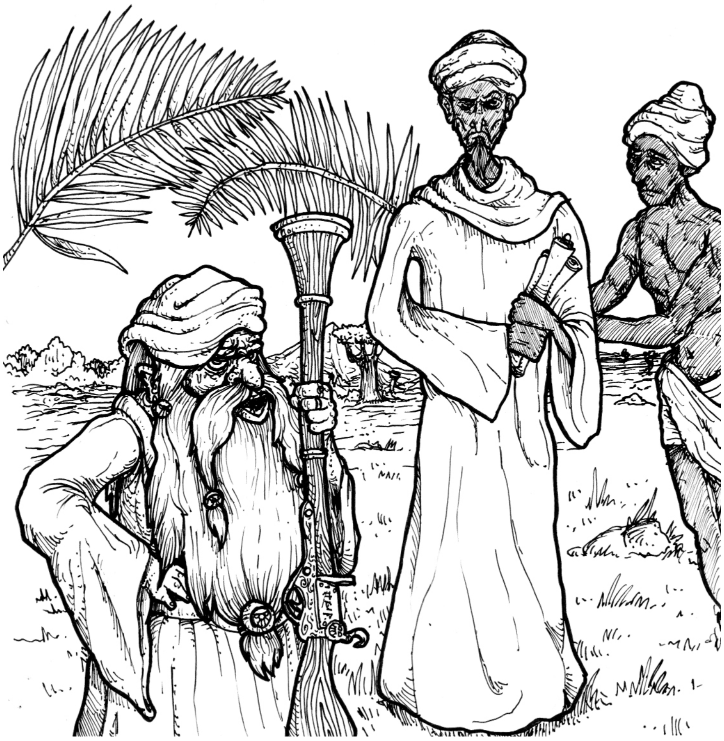
'Perhaps this hunt is cursed,' Kilgar sighs and glances at the bizarre staff in his hands, 'Even this blunderbuss I loaned from my Fangthane cousins is of no help. I couldn't even hit the side of a mountain with it! It is hopeless!'

Kilgar's shoulders slump down and he sighs in despair once more. If you are feeling generous you may offer the unlucky hunter one of the hard-won trophies you have collected on your journey so far (turn to **117**). If not then there is nothing more to do here. You leave Kilgar to his misery and continue heading towards the distant cliffs (turn to **47**).



175

You walk to the outskirts of the village and decide on your first move. Boneridge sits roughly in the centre of the Plain of Bones. To the west, across the valley, thick grassland stretches almost all the way to the distant jungles of Silur Cha, empire of the Lizard Men. That way will take you near the territory of the Oldbones, a tribe of primitive humans and your fierce enemies. The lands south of your village have long been off-limits due to the tales of demons and evil spirits that are said to lurk there. You dare not venture in that direction lest you lose your soul to some unholy fiend. To the east, the land dips gently down as it makes its way towards a distant range of hills. It is a barren, sparsely inhabited region that is seldom visited by your folk except when travelling to Courga Rock, a holy site. Finally, the lightly forested plains to the north are known as a prime grazing area for some of the larger plant-eating beasts. In which direction will you head: East (turn to **36**), West (turn to **248**), or North (turn to **9**)?



176

You dash away from your awesome opponent, realising there is no hope of victory. The Dragon's savage talons rake down your back as you flee – lose 3 STAMINA points. If you are still alive, you soon arrive at the far end of the cavern. You desperately search the wall for an exit as the thunderous rumble of the Dragon's approaching steps rings in your ears. *Test your Skill*; if you are successful, turn to **122**. If you are unsuccessful, you are unable to find an escape route and must face the Dragon once more. Return to **27** and finish your fight, but note that you cannot try to escape again, for your enemy will not allow you to flee a second time.

177

Ogmil is nowhere to be seen. Whatever has happened to your people, you are certain that he has something to do with it. You are pondering what your next move will be when a voice calls out to you. 'Bless the ancestors you're alive!'

A striking young woman emerges beneath a heap of netting, her face beaming with joy. It is Kuwi, the daughter of the village's lead hunter. She rushes over and embraces you. 'I thought you had perished out there! Most of the other candidates had already returned and we thought you lost. By Courga it is good to see you again!'

You ask Kuwi what terrible fate has befallen your village. Tears spill down her cheeks as she recounts the tale.

'As I said, we thought everyone who would return had already done so. Valgrek called for the candidates to assemble in the meeting circle and present their trophies for judging. When they had done as he had asked, Valgrek held up a strange red gem, as big as his fist, which glowed with a fell light. One by one, the hunters seemed to fall under a spell. Their arms fell limp at their sides and their eyes shone with the same light as the cursed gem. The wicked shaman ordered them to round up the rest of our people – and they did so, as if they had no will of their own! It was terrible. My own father tried to hunt me down!'

Kuwi breaks down at the awful memory, her body wracked with heavy sobs. The tears subside and she regains her composure. A grim look is in her eyes. 'I managed to give him the slip. I think I have learned more from him than he realises. Everyone else was gathered up and held prisoner until the Oldbones arrived.'

'They came riding terrible lizards. Each had the same vacant expression and glowing eyes as the candidates that Valgrek had enchanted. At his command, our people were loaded into cages that were pulled along behind the great beasts. And with that they left! Only Ogmil stayed behind. I think he was looking for me.'

Turn to **129**.

178

You weave a tangled path across the grasslands, zigzagging and looping your trail in an attempt to confuse your pursuers. Still you can hear them, and they sound much closer than you had hoped. Just then you spot one of the happiest sights of your life – trees! In the distance you can see a cluster of thorntrees, their umbrella-like forms marking the end of the grasslands. With any luck, the Terrorclaws will not pursue you once you are out of their hunting grounds. A blood-curdling screech comes from nearby. It can mean only one thing – they have picked up your trail! One last sprint should see you to the tree line, but will you make it there before your hunters catch up with you? Roll three dice and *Test your Stamina*. If you are successful, turn to **99**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **148**.

179

You spot someone off to your left, skulking through the grass towards you. It is a hunched, wild-haired man, clad only in a loincloth and carrying a short wooden spear. You recognise him as one of the Oldbones, a primitive tribe that dwells in the rocky western highlands. Realizing he has been seen, the hunter disregards all stealth and dashes towards you, bellowing some unintelligible war-cry.

NEANDERTHAL	SKILL 7	STAMINA 8

If you win you may claim the necklace of bones and tribal icons that hangs around the man's neck (add the Oldbone Necklace to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do). Turn to **9**.

180

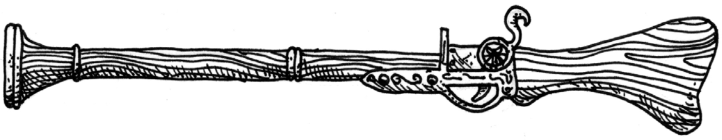
You slide away the woven cover and peer into the pit but can see nothing but blackness. If you have a rope, you can lower yourself into the pit (turn to **98**). Otherwise, if you haven't already done so, you can look in the central hole (turn to **134**) or the hole on the left (turn to **180**). Alternatively you can leave the cavern and return to the entrance chamber (turn to **46**).

181

You search the mansion from top to bottom but find nothing but ruins. Dejected, you exit the massive building and return to the valley floor. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **165**.

182

You carefully edge down the other side of the ridge, looking for the entrance that leads to the series of caves that ring the walls of the gorge. It is bound to be well-hidden to prevent enemies such as you from finding it. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 18. If you are Unlucky, turn to **119**.



183

You reach the bottom of the pit and approach the hunched figure. It cowers in fear, hiding its face with its arms. Gently you reach out and pull away a limb, revealing the terrified face of Udeme, one of your fellow tribesmen! The fear in his face melts away to disbelief and joy as he recognises you. 'Praise Courga I am saved!' he cries.

Although weakened from his imprisonment, Udeme is able to climb, and together you clamber out of the pit. You ask him what happened. He explains that he was exploring the plains for a worthy trophy, just as you are, when he ventured too close to Oldbone Gorge and was captured. The primitive creatures tossed him into the pit, taking cruel delight in pelting him with stones. You ask Udeme where all the Oldbones have gone.

'That I cannot explain,' he says, 'yesterday I was overcome with a strange madness. A voice spoke inside my head, compelling me to leave the pit and follow it into the wild. I was powerless to resist and would have done anything it commanded me to, but the pit was too deep and I was unable to climb out. After a time I blacked out, and when I awoke all was silent, until you arrived.'

You help Udeme along the tunnel and out to the cave entrance. He will find his way back to Boneridge village, but you still have several hours before you are due back there with your prize. If you want to (and are able to), you may give Udeme one of your meals to give him strength on his return journey (turn to **13**). Otherwise you bid him farewell (turn to **170**).

184

You submit your offering and kneel before Courga Rock. Eyes closed, you concentrate on slowing your breathing and focus on connecting with the perilous forces of the Celestial Court. Time passes – whether it is minutes or hours, you do not know – but eventually you sense an otherworldly power. As the wind whistles past the stone, you fancy you can hear a faint voice intermingled with it:

Outwardly you walk tall and proud, but inside still you doubt yourself. Seek the dark cliffs of the winged destroyer. Find what lies within and your grip upon destiny will grow ever stronger.

The wind dies away and the voice can no longer be heard. You leave Courga Rock, pondering the mysterious information you have received. Turn to **204**.

185

You try to dodge the warrior's attack but the spear catches you in the side – lose 2 STAMINA points. You stagger backwards towards the edge of the cliff – roll two dice and Test your Skill! If you are unsuccessful, turn to **107**. If you are successful, you manage to avoid tumbling over the edge.

You engage the Oldbone warrior in combat. Only now do you notice his blank expression and his tiny eyes, glowing red with some malign influence!

NEANDERTHAL	SKILL 7	STAMINA 7

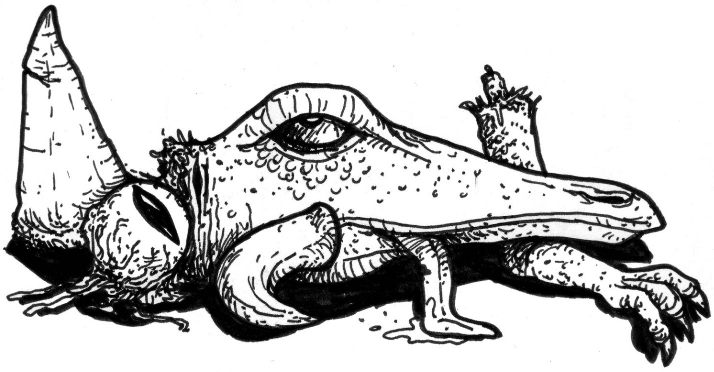
If you ever roll a double for your Attack Strength, turn to 111. If the Oldbone warrior ever rolls a double for his Attack Strength, turn to **107**. If you defeat your opponent, you may claim his weapon as a trophy (add the Neanderthal Spear to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do) before heading back to the junction; turn to **63**.

186

With a ferocious battle-cry, you ready your weapon and leap to the attack. The long-fanged cat snarls at you with a mixture of anger and panic.

SABRE-TOOTHED TIGER	SKILL 11	STAMINA 8

If you win, you quickly realise there is no time to savour the victory. While you were engaged in combat, the wind had changed direction, fanning the fire directly towards you. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you manage to avoid the flames. You are forced to leave your kill behind, but at least you have escaped with your life; turn to **120**. If you are Unlucky, the flames race across the ground quicker than you can believe. Thick smoke swirls about you, choking your lungs, stinging your eyes and obscuring your vision. You attempt to run away but the wildfire is everywhere you turn. Soon you will burn along with your fallen foe. Your adventure ends here.



187

You carefully work your way down the winding staircase, stepping over gaps where the stonework has crumbled away. The sunlight from above slowly fades until you are navigating through near-total darkness. If you have a torch and wish to light it, now would be the time to do so (remember to cross the torch off your *Adventure Sheet*).

Eventually you come across a gap in the stairs that is too vast to step across. Your only hope is to leap across the gulf to where the steps continue once more. If you wish to rethink your path you can head back up the staircase and either explore the top of the tower if you haven't already done so (turn to **45**) or leave the tower and explore elsewhere (turn to **165**). Otherwise you lunge across the gap and hope for the best. Roll two dice and *Test your Skill*, deducting the result by one if you are carrying a lit torch. If you are successful, turn to **197**. If you are unsuccessful, your leap fails to clear the gap, and you drop into the darkness; turn to **147**.

188

An ear-splitting boom shakes your bones as you strike the dragon, a blast of fire and smoke shooting out of the flared metal end of the staff and filling the cavern with ochreous light for one brilliant moment. In disbelief you watch as the dragon totters about on unsteady limbs before crashing to the floor with an earth-shaking thud.

As the smoke clears, you find your titanic opponent lying dead before you, a scorched, ragged hole where its left eye used to be. Now turn to **124**.

189

At the last second, just as you are about to release your weapon, you notice some movement in the tall grass off to your right. A humanoid figure creeps along the ground, his tanned torso joined to the lithe body of a lion – a FELINAUR! You then spot three more of the bizarre creatures, all sneaking silently towards the antelopes and armed with short wooden bows. The half-man, half-lion Felinaurs are proud and territorial creatures, and you had almost spoiled their hunt! Before they notice you, you quietly melt back into the tall grass before they notice you and continue on your way, turn to **89**.

190

You slide through the gap and enter a long, low-ceilinged chamber. Dominating the centre of the room is a stone sarcophagus, the lid of which is carved into the shape of a youthful warrior, clad in archaic armour and resting both hands on the pommel of a broadsword. Two metal braziers, long since burnt out, hang down from the ceiling on other side of the tomb.

There is little else of interest in the chamber, and you prepare to leave. Suddenly the braziers burst into flame, flickering with a cold green fire. At the same time, the heavy stone door slams shut with a resounding boom. You push against the door with all your might but cannot shift it – you are trapped!

'Greetings intruder,' a cold, disembodied voice echoes throughout the chamber, 'in life I was famed for my skill in battle, but in truth I preferred tests of the mind to tests of the blade. Answer the following question and you shall earn your freedom:

'Seven knights arrived at the battlefield, and each of them shook hands once with each of the others. How many handshakes were given?'

If you know the answer to the riddle, turn to the same paragraph as the answer. If you do not there is no escape from the tomb – soon your bones will join those of the dead king.

191

The cave reeks of the beast you just slew. You enter, one arm held across your nose to block the stench, and look around. In the back you find a narrow tunnel, small enough that its prisoner couldn't escape through it. You follow it and, after some minutes of twisting and turning, find yourself back inside the main Oldbone warrens. Do you have the codeword *Elcatnet* written on your *Adventure Sheet*? If so, turn to **97**. Otherwise turn to **63**.

192

The exterior of the building is so weathered and broken that it is difficult to imagine what the building originally looked like. The thick walls, composed of massive stone blocks, are an unfamiliar sight to you, for your people dwell only in tents made of hide and bone. A chill ripples down your spine as you approach the arched entrance and step inside.

It takes a minute or two for your eyes to adjust to the darkness inside the ruin. During this time, effectively blind, you keep your senses peeled for any sign of approaching danger, but it passes without incident. Soon you are able to make out a statue standing against the far wall. Mostly untouched by the passing of the ages, it stands on a stone pedestal and appears to be of some mighty king, his brow weighed down by an ornate crown. Both hands rest upon the pommel of a broadsword of exotic design.

An inscription is written on the face of the pedestal in some ancient and long-forgotten language:

> *Knqxum Cqajwmndb cqn Vrpqch, oxach-bnlxwm nvynaxa*
> *xo puxarxdb Lnunwjbrj. Juu bqjuu xknh qrb mrerwn fruu!*

There appears to be little else of interest in the ruins. You rest awhile before heading back out into the light and heat; turn to **29**.

193

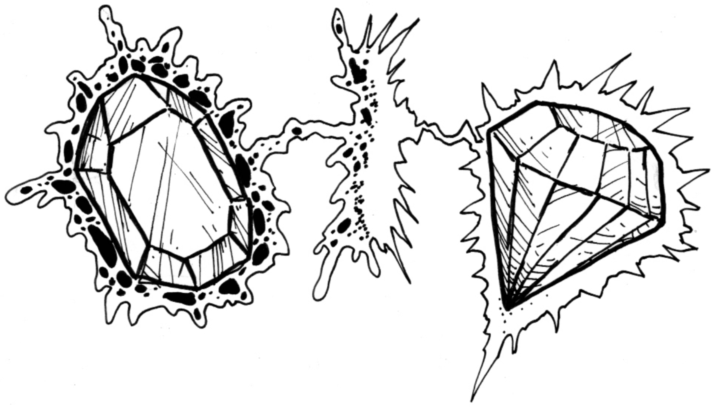
Although a fiercely arrogant individual and a competing candidate, Sefu is still a member of your tribe and deserving of your aid. Leaving him to fight for himself against such a foe was a cold-hearted and callous act. Lose 1 LUCK point and turn to **214**.

194

At last you have made it to the bottom of the Cauldron. You are surrounded by greenery more lush and verdant than you have ever witnessed before. The shattered remnants of a once-mighty kingdom lie jumbled before you, covered in moss and tangled vines. Insects as large as your arm whir overhead, darting between the vibrant flowers that seem to carpet every surface. It astounds you that a place so full of life is also a haunt for the restless dead.

Somewhere in this valley is the key to discovering where Valgrek has taken your people, and you are sure it lies somewhere in the ancient stone ruins that dot the landscape. Off to your left stand the remains of a tower, leaning awkwardly towards the distant mountains. To the right an enormous columned building sits atop a great spur of rock thrust out of the broken earth. Immediately before you is a dark opening that leads beneath the ground, but to where you do not know. Now, where will you begin your search?

The leaning tower?	Turn to **8**.
The columned building?	Turn to **235**.
The dark opening?	Turn to **16**.



195

You explain to Paru that although you have shared many adventures together, this is one you must face alone. He nods sadly and wishes you well before departing the village. You are now the only candidate remaining in Boneridge. You may still speak to Ogmil (turn to **160**), or Kuwi (turn to **144**) if you wish. Otherwise you set off on your journey, turn to **175**.

196

Dozens of beady eyes greet the flickering light of your torch, each pair belonging to an enormous GIANT BAT. The winged mammals carpet the walls around you, their large, furry bodies packed close together and hanging upside-down from the rock with cruelly hooked claws. Your entrance has disturbed their slumber and, one by one, they drop from their perches and swirl in the air around you. Then, as a single flock, they descend, teeth and claws poised to tear your flesh. Fight them as a single enemy.

GIANT BATS SKILL 6 STAMINA 12

Each Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 1-3 your torch is knocked from your hand and extinguished. You must continue with a -4 penalty to your Attack Strength until you leave the mountain.

If you win, the remaining Giant Bats break off their attack and, deafening you with their piercing shrieks, flee into the darkness. You may now collect and relight your torch if you wish. Add the codeword *Mrala* to your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to **242**.

197

Your mighty leap clears the hole with ease. Your feet thump on the broad stone stairs, which crack and shift worryingly under your weight.

If you are carrying six or more items in your rucksack, the step gives way beneath you, dropping you into the darkness; turn to **147**. If you are carrying five or less items, the staircase holds and you are able to move to more stable footing. The staircase winds down several more levels before you reach the stone-flagged floor of the tower; turn to **19**.

198

The second the dagger leaves your grip, you know that your aim is off. It thuds into the dirt a good two feet from your prey, which, along with the rest of the herd, scatters into the tall grass. As you recover your weapon, you suddenly hear a chorus of low growls coming from behind you. You turn and are confronted with four strange creatures with the top halves of men but the bottom halves of lions – FELINAURS! Each is armed with a wooden short bow.

'These are our hunting grounds, human,' snarls their leader, 'and that was our kill! We demand recompense!'

There are too many of them for you to kill; you will have to bargain your way out of this! The Felinaurs will accept four of your Provisions as payment for the antelope you frightened off; turn to **156**. If you do not have enough food to satisfy the Felinaurs, their leonine faces turn grim. As one they raise their bows and fire their arrows at you. They will eat tonight, but your adventure ends here...

199

You present Kilgar with the pelt you removed from the Black Lion last night (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*). He holds it before him, turning it about and examining it from all angles. A big grin splits his bearded face. 'What a magnificent find! I've never seen anything like it. Such as lustrous coat, black as night and soft as silk. Iskander, bring me the chest!' The guide rushes over to one of the camels and returns with a small wooden box. Kilgar opens its lid and pulls out a chunk of gleaming yellow metal. 'Fangthane gold,' he says, his face glowing with pride, 'the purest of the pure, and the most precious metal known to Dwarfkind. I give this to you in thanks for what you have done for me today. May the blessings of the Earth-mother be upon you.'

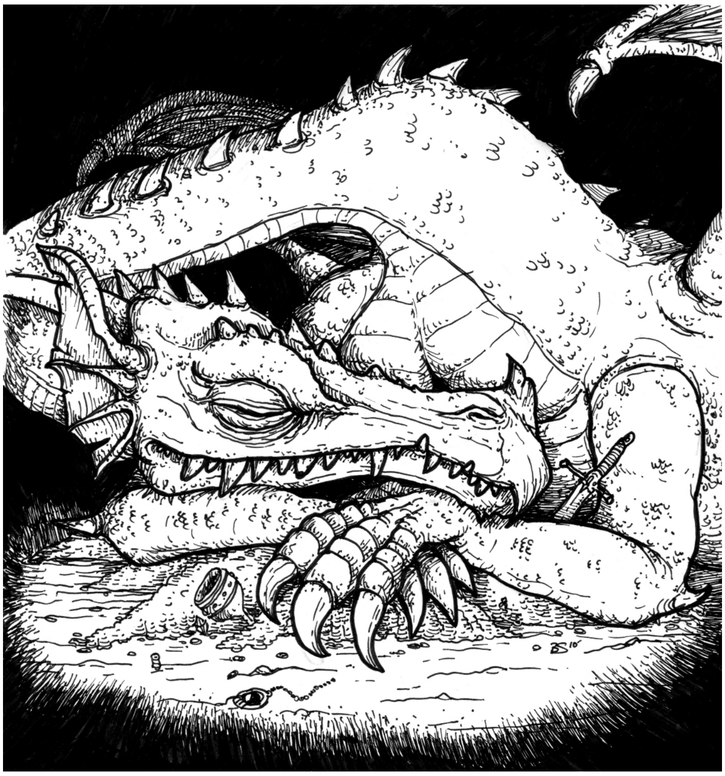
You take the chunk of metal from Kilgar, although you are unsure what use it will have (add the Fangthane Gold to your *Adventure Sheet*). Kilgar starts to walk away but pauses and looks back at you. 'You know what? You may as well take this too.' He tosses you the odd metal-and-wood staff. 'I won't need it anymore and it should make your job a mite easier. Handle it with care, though, for it is loaded and primed to go off at the drop of an axe!' Add the codeword *rewoperif* to your *Adventure Sheet*.

With the help of his aides, Kilgar mounts his camel and starts his long journey home to Vynheim. You also have some way to go before your quest is over. Add 1 point to your LUCK score and turn to **47**.

200

You flee from the claustrophobic crypts, up the stairs and back into the blinding daylight. The warmth of the afternoon sun fills you with joy. You have faced the corrupt ruler of this fallen empire – now it is time to find your people.

You head for the eastern rim of the Cauldron; with any luck there will be a way back up to the plains. You are so consumed with thoughts of what may lay ahead that you do not notice the snare that has been laid directly in your path. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **115**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **238**.



201

You clamber up the rocky outcrop, your toughened hands and feet finding nooks with ease. The closer you get to the top of the ridge the more cautious you become, for the Oldbones are bound to have guards posted nearby. You reach the top in no time and risk a peek at what lies ahead. The ridge you have just climbed descends sharply into a steep, rounded gorge, before rising up again into the next stony crest. It is within this gorge that the Oldbones make their home. You spot a crude lean-to made of bones and hide just off to your left, which must serve as the post for a lookout, but there is no one manning it. In fact, you cannot detect any signs of life, be it man or beast; even the wind is silent and still. Something feels very wrong here. Will you investigate further (turn to **182**), or explore along the spine of the ridge, which stretches away from the gorge to the north-east (turn to **39**)?

202

You have entered a vast stone vault that lies at the very heart of the dark mountain. The chamber is so large that you cannot see its ceiling or the other side – the walls simply dissolve into inky blackness. What you can see, however, chills you to the bone.

A mighty winged beast lies curled before you, its red, scaly hide glistening in the torchlight. Its four enormous limbs end in shining, armoured talons, each as long as your arm. Resting on one clawed forelimb is a long, lizard-like head, dominated by a fang-filled maw that splits it in two. Thankfully, its eyes are closed – the RED DRAGON appears to be asleep.

If you have the codeword *mrala* written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to **27**. If not, you can either attack the sleeping Dragon (turn to **172**), or try and sneak past it and try to find the other side of the cavern (turn to **44**).

203

At last you have returned home! You walk down the main path that leads to the village, proud of what you have achieved, but no one comes out to greet you. In fact, as far as you can tell the entire village is deserted. There are no fires lit, no smells of the evening meal being prepared, and no voices of the returned candidates swapping tales of adventure. You appear to be utterly alone.

By the time you reach the first clusters of tents, your fears are confirmed. You poke your head into the dwellings, only to find each one deserted. You rush to the meeting circle in the centre of the village, but it is also deserted, the fire pits cold and dead. It is as if your entire tribe has vanished into thin air!

You hear a voice coming from somewhere to the west. You race towards the sound, ducking and weaving past tents and the netting that is strung up between the bones of great beasts to protect against the harsh sand storms that sometimes afflict the area. On the fringes of the village, standing on the edge of the cliff overlooking Boneridge Valley, you find Ogmil, the apprentice of Valgrek the village shaman. He spins around to face you.

‘Kuwi?’ he cries, ‘Oh, it’s you. I wondered whether you had the fortitude to survive the Rite.’ You have never gotten along well with Ogmil, but now his words seem particularly laced with venom. You ask him what happened to your people.

‘They have been taken far away from this place. I know where. Come, I will show you.’ He beckons you to join him at the cliff’s edge. If you do as he wishes, turn to **64**. If you prefer to remain where you are, turn to **93**.

204

Isolated granite hills and ridges jut out of the barren wilderness as you continue journeying east. Far off in the distance you can see a line of hills; beyond them lays the fabled ocean, a legendary place of never-ending water! One of these days you will venture out that way and see it for yourself, but not today. It is already past midday and you have yet to encounter any creature that might offer up a trophy worthy of a chieftain. You decide to head in a more northerly direction, where the plains are lusher and life is more plentiful.

In time you come across another of the granite hills, but this one is truly enormous. Its surface is riddled with deep cracks, in which have sprouted small, twisted trees and shrubs. At the very top of the hill you spot the gleam of the sun shining on water. Replenishing your water supply would not be a bad idea, especially since you have to face the baking heat of the afternoon. Will you scale the hill and investigate (turn to **162**), or ignore it and press on northwards (turn to **173**)?

205

Amazingly, the fighting beasts barrel past you and over the cliff, leaving you unscathed as they plunge to their doom, still locked together in mortal combat. Relieved to have survived the epic battle, you find the start of the track that leads down to the Cauldron and begin your descent. Turn to **33**.

206

The tunnel continues straight for a short distance before terminating in a blinding wall of light. As your eyes adjust, you realise you are standing on a precipice, looking out into the inside of Oldbone Gorge. Will you approach the edge and take a closer look (turn to **155**), or return to the junction and take another path (turn to **63**).

207

The sun begins its downward arc as you continue to trudge through the grasslands. At some point you will have to make camp for the night. The stillness of the afternoon is suddenly broken by the sound of a bowstring being loosed – *Test your Luck*.

If you are Lucky, the arrow misses you by a hairs-breadth. If you are Unlucky, an arrow sinks into your left thigh – lose 3 STAMINA points. A bizarre creature bursts from out of the grass; it has the upper body of a man but the lower body of a lion. The FELINAUR looks surprised to see you, but its face is soon split by a cruel, sharp-toothed grin. ‘You’ll do,’ it snarls, and leaps at you, claws unsheathed!

FELINAUR SKILL 8 STAMINA 7

If you manage to defeat your opponent, you hurriedly continue on your way – Felinaurs rarely hunt alone. Turn to **89**.

208

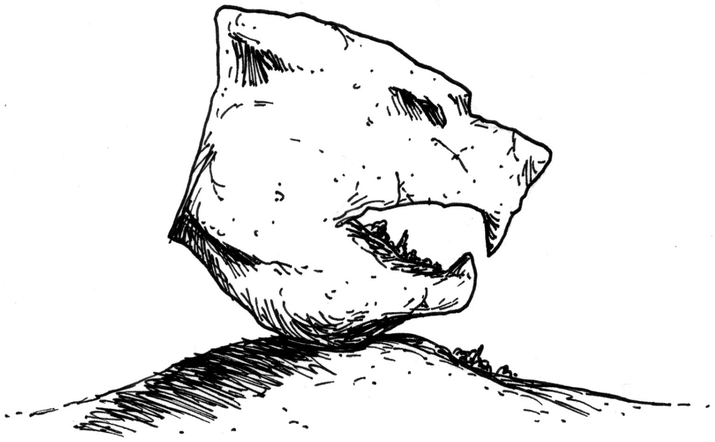
The pit is narrow enough for you to put your back against one side and your feet against the other. In this position, you are able to shuffle your way out, but it is tiring work. Roll three dice and *Test your Stamina* three times in succession. If you are successful all three times you escape the pit on your first go; turn to **158**. If you fail one or more rolls, turn to **154**.

209

By pulling on a length of cord, you are able to yank open the portcullis. Before the gate is even halfway open a massive scaly head rams into it, smashing it into fragments of bone and fibre. An equally huge body emerges from the darkness of the cave beyond, supported by two muscular, clawed legs and a long, heavy tail that lashes behind it. Two smaller clawed forelimbs scrabble furiously at the air. It appears to be a relative of the feared Tyrant King, smaller in size but no less fierce. The bipedal predator stalks towards you, its long jaws lined with dozens of sharp teeth.

ALLOSAURUS SKILL 10 STAMINA 15

Regain 1 LUCK point if you manage to defeat this fearsome foe. You may claim a trophy if you wish to (add the Allosaurus Tooth to your *Adventure Sheet* if you do). You can now explore the cave it burst out of (turn to **191**), or, if you haven't done so already, you can try to open the other gate (turn to **131**).



210

You withdraw the Halcyon Crystal as the Thunder Lizard cranes its neck towards you. Immediately the crystal blazes with the familiar golden light; tendrils of the of the magical energy flow out from it, extending up to meet the beast's descending head.

The instant the golden energy connects, you feel an intimate bond with the animal, suddenly empathising with the hurt and panic that it feels. Conversely, you are sure that the Thunder Lizard understands your plight and your intentions towards it. Wordlessly you communicate back and forth with the gentle giant, pure thoughts and emotions flowing along the link that the Halcyon Crystal has created.

The great beast bows its head as an understanding is reached: the Thunder Lizard will accompany you on your journey and help to put an end to the evil of the Slaver Gem, an evil that it too has witnessed. You call down to your friends and relay to them the amazing event that has transpired. It takes some coaxing, but when they see how calm and friendly the Thunder Lizard has become they hesitantly climb up to join you on the creature's back.

The ancestors are most pleased with your performance in the hunt. Restore up to 2 SKILL points, 6 STAMINA points and 4 LUCK points. If you were suffering from Lung Rot, it has now been cured. Buoyed by the success of your hunt, you and your team continue on your way to the east, sitting astride your new ally.

Note the codeword *Otnorb* on your *Adventure Sheet* and note that the Thunder Lizard has a SKILL of 16 and a STAMINA of 30. When you face an opponent, you can let the Thunder Lizard fight the battle for you, subtracting from his STAMINA if he loses an Attack Round. If the Thunder Lizard is killed, you will have to fight the rest of the battle yourself (remember to remove the *Otnorb* codeword from your *Adventure Sheet*). Now add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **250**.

211

Unarmed and desperate, you rummage through your carry sack for something to aid you. Your hand finds the odd device of metal and wood that Kilgar gave you. Figuring that an unconventional weapon is better than no weapon at all, you whip out the staff and prepare to do battle one more. Roaring in fury, the dragon sweeps its massive head towards you, cavernous jaws threatening to swallow you whole. Skilfully you sidestep the incoming attack and rap the staff across the monster's snout. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **188**.

If you are Unlucky, the dragon shakes off your blow and comes at you with renewed fury. Return to **27** and continue your battle but, each time you win an Attack Round, you may choose to *Test your Luck* again. If you are ever Lucky, turn to **188** immediately (make a note of this paragraph so you do not forget). If you are Unlucky, your blow inflicts the normal damage.

212

You are almost halfway across the stony chamber when your leading footsteps into empty air instead of solid rock. You plunge into a deep chasm, at the bottom of which you find chilling waters and a swift death. Your adventure ends here.

213

You submit your offering and kneel before Courga Rock. Eyes closed, you concentrate on slowing your breathing and focus on connecting with the perilous forces of the Celestial Court. Time passes – you do not know whether it is minutes or hours – but eventually you begin to sense an otherworldly power. The wind whistles past the stone; you fancy you can hear a faint voice intermingled with it:

Strong and proud is your bearing. The curse of the fallen empire will enslave the free peoples. Seek the tomb of the crooked king, deep in the cradle of death!

The wind dies away and the voice can no longer be heard. You leave Courga Rock, pondering the mysterious information you have received. Turn to **204**.

214

Your journey takes you to a copse of baobab trees, standing alone in a sea of grassland. You decide to enter, seeking relief from the scorching rays of the afternoon sun. After hours of travelling across the wide-open plains, the densely-packed woods feel positively claustrophobic. Nevertheless you pick your way through the trees and enjoy the shade of their leafy limbs. The leaves, fruit and seeds of the baobab are edible; you can spend some time collecting supplies if you wish (roll one die and halve the result. Add that many Provisions to your *Adventure Sheet*. If you roll a 1, add 1 meal to your *Adventure Sheet*).

Eventually you come across a small pool of water fed by some underground spring that has given life to the surrounding oasis. A four-legged beast the size of an ox and covered in leathery green skin is drinking at the water's edge. A row of orange plates runs down its spine, which ends in a short tail studded with stubby spikes. Will you approach the baby Shingleback and also partake of the fresh water (turn to **151**), or ignore the feelings of thirst and press on (turn to **7**)?

215

As you are leaving the village, you encounter Paru wandering the other way, confusion and distress written on his face. You fill him in on the treachery of Valgrek and the enslavement of the tribe. At the conclusion of your tale his expression turns to one of grim determination. 'Lead the way,' he says, 'I'll follow you anywhere.'

Paru will accompany you on your adventure once more. You may add 2 to your Attack Strength as long as he accompanies you (making the bonus a total of 4 as Kuwi is with you also). Now a trio, you leave Boneridge Village behind, the fate of your people resting in your hands. Turn to **132**.

216

You set off north along a dusty track that leads to the traditional hunting grounds of your tribe. You should be able to make it to the savannah by midday, provided there are no delays along the way. Before you lies mile after mile of wide-open plains, carpeted with limp brown grass. The track peters out into nothing, so you wander in a northerly direction. Roll one die. If the result is 1-3, turn to **60**. If the result is 4-6, turn to **179**.

217

Suddenly you hear a familiar voice cry out. Sefu charges out of the bushes, brandishing his hunting spear. He plunges the weapon deep into the flank of the carnivore, which roars in pain. At the same time, the Threehorn charges, goring its foe's belly with its terrible horns. The carnivore staggers away, blood pouring from its mortal wounds. Sefu stands before you, a bemused expression etched on his face, as the tri-horned victor gallops away to rejoin its herd.

'Again you try to steal my kill?' he exclaims. Ignoring his inflammatory accusation, you quickly fill Sefu in on your quest and the fate of your tribe. He smacks his forehead in dismay. 'I've completely lost track of time! After you spoiled my kill I became obsessed with finding another target worthy of my talent. I started tracking that brute yesterday and forgot all about the judging ceremony. It matters not; I'm clearly the winner.'

You interrupt Sefu's boasting and impress on him the urgency of your mission. He agrees to join you, if only to prove that he is the greater warrior. You may add 2 to your Attack Strength while he is with you (making the bonus a total of 4 as Kuwi is already with you, and 6 if Paru is with you also). Regain 1 LUCK point for this fortunate encounter.

Leaving the spooked Threehorns behind, you find the track leading down to the Cauldron and begin your descent. Turn to **33**.

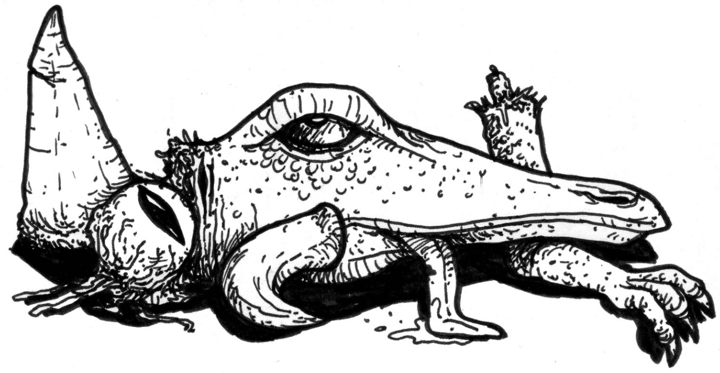
218

The tunnel disappears into the darkness; if you advance any further it would be helpful to have some light. If you possess a Torch you can light it now by striking the two pieces of flint together, causing it to burst into flame (remove the Torch from your *Adventure Sheet*). Now armed with light and fire – something the Oldbones have yet to master fully – you set off down the tunnel.

If you do not have a torch, or do not wish to light one, you will have to rely on your night vision. Reduce your SKILL by 4 until you return to the junction.

The tunnel twists and turns through the rock, leading to numerous small chambers littered with filthy bedding and waste. Eventually it terminates in a large natural cavern that has the appearance of a great hall. A crude throne has been carved out of the far wall and piled high with furs and hides. Sitting on this throne, clad in more skins, is one of the Oldbone tribesmen. He is tall and muscular; in one hand he holds a long spear decorated with the trophies of countless kills. An intricate crown of bone sits atop his skull. You realize that this can be none other than the chieftain of all the Oldbone people!

Strangely, the chieftain does not react to your presence. He remains still as the grave, staring blankly at the opposite wall. Will you approach the chieftain (turn to **161**), or return to the crossroads (turn to **63**)?



219

The morning finds you strolling across the plains, still seeking a trophy suitable for the leader of your people. You arrive at a large watering hole that is teeming with life; herds of Buffalo and Antelope, flocks of wading birds and a pair of Threehorns are amongst the creatures enjoying the life-giving water. Will you stop to drink from the watering hole (turn to **149**), or press on into the west (turn to **61**)?

220

You land lightly on the vast back of the beast, immediately dropping flat on your stomach and hugging tightly to its rubbery hide. The Thunder Lizard, sensing your presence, halts its flight in the ravine and swings its head around on its massive neck to face you. This will either be the greatest hunt in the history of your tribe or the very end of it!

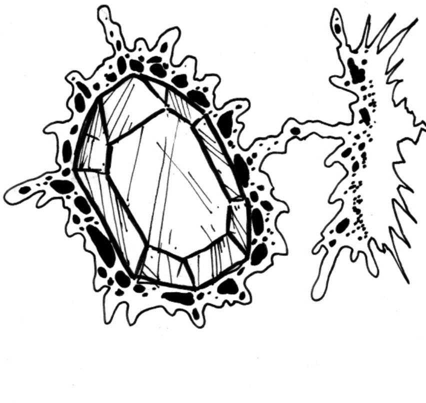
BRONTOSAURUS SKILL 16 STAMINA 30

Your companions have surrounded the Thunder Lizard and will aid you in your battle. If you possess the Halcyon Crystal, you will know how to call upon its power.

If you achieve the impossible and win the battle, the gargantuan creature crashes heavily to its knees, blood gushing from the countless wounds you and your friends have inflicted. Quietly you gather and watch the life fade from the eyes of the mighty beast.

The ancestors are pleased with your offering. Restore up to 4

STAMINA points and 2 LUCK points. If you were suffering from Lung Rot, it has now been cured. Buoyed by the success of your hunt, you and your team continue on your way to the east. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **250**.



221

You fling your weapon at the creature, striking it dead with one blow. It crumples to the floor in a heap. Having reached the bottom of the pit, you roll the body over, revealing one of your own tribesmen! It is Udeme, a candidate like you. He must have been captured by the Oldbones while hunting for a trophy and imprisoned here. You are wracked with guilt at killing one of your people; lose 2 LUCK points. Consumed with sadness, you climb out of the hole and leave the cavern altogether; turn to **170**.

222

The valley floor rushes towards you at frightening speed. You claw at the cliff's face but can find no purchase. Your body catches on the corner of a shallow ledge, crushing the air from your lungs and causing several ribs to crack in protest (lose 4 STAMINA points). If you are still alive, you fight through the pain and grab hold of the ledge, halting your descent. Slowly, painfully, you scale your way back up to the top of the cliff; turn to **177**.

223

You call and wave to the wagon as it approaches, signalling that you harbour no ill intent. A flap at the front of the vehicle is pushed aside and a scrawny dark-skinned man pokes his head out. As soon as he spots you, his face lights up and he excitedly climbs out to greet you. You are fortunate enough to have been taught some of the language of the far-off people and are able to make out most of what the man says: 'Hail, plains-friend! How do you fare this fine Reaping day? Pray, do you belong to the Boneridge tribe?'

You nod. The man positively beams. 'What great fortune this is! I was just on my way to your village. Hasrah must be smiling upon us today. My name is Abir and I come seeking trade. Do you possess any of those polished stones or delightful bone carvings your people do so well?'

You shake your head. Abir's grin weakens ever so slightly. His positive mood appears to have been dented. 'That is a great shame. The people of Shabak, my city, are ever clamouring for crafts from the plains. Might you have anything else of interest?'

You may trade any trophies you have collected on your journey so far with Abir in exchange for an item from his wagon. A single trophy can be swapped for a single item (except for the Tattered Lion Pelt – Abir isn't interested!). The merchant has the following items for trade:

Trail Mix – a mixture of dried fruit, nuts and strips of meat that serves as 3 Provisions.
Rope – a coil of thin rope, some ten metres long.
Torch – a short wooden pole topped with rags that have been dipped in flammable oil, and a pair of flint stones with which to ignite it.
Lucky Charm – any one time you are asked to *Test your Luck*, you can choose to automatically be Lucky. You can draw on the magic of this charm once and once only, after which the charm becomes worthless.
Silver Headband – a plain circlet of silver, bearing no decoration or inscription. Abir knows nothing of its origins.

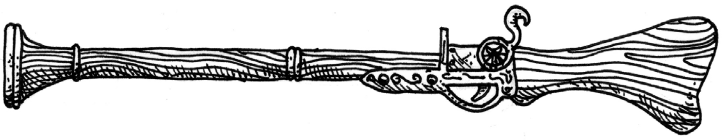
Add any items you receive to your *Adventure Sheet*. If you receive the Silver Headband, turn to **271**. Having concluded your exchange, Abir wishes you great fortune before continuing on his way. You do the same, turn to **61**.

224

You make it to the valley floor, but your companion is not so lucky. Kuwi loses her footing on the slope and tumbles head over heels to the bottom. You rush to her aid as she gets to her feet, gingerly nursing an arm that appears to be broken. Using the abundant flora that grows all around you, you are able to fashion a splint for Kuwi's wounded limb. Fortunately she is still able to accompany you, but she is no longer able to fight at your side. From now on you can no longer receive the bonus she gave to your Attack Strength. Now turn to **194**.

225

You stumble into a much larger chamber than the one you were just in. The animal smell you detected at the cave entrance is at its strongest here. You lose touch with the wall and, disoriented, slowly shuffle your way through the darkness, completely blind. After a time your face presses against the scaly hide of some enormous beast. Disturbed from its long slumber, the Dragon snaps its jaws about your waist and bites down, shearing your body into two, more easily digested portions. Your adventure ends here.



226

The day winds on as you cross the vast green savannah. In the distance, you can see its end at a line of rugged cliffs. Suddenly a deafening crack echoes across the plains, causing you to throw yourself to the ground in panic. You cautiously lift your head and scan the horizon. Off to the north you see a group of people standing next to a line of camels. At this distance you cannot make out who or what they are, but you are sure the sound came from that direction. Will you head towards them (turn to **174**), or creep past them towards the cliffs (turn to **47**)?

227

Despite your best efforts, you cannot free yourself from the powerful tentacle, which drags you over the lip of the pit and into the inky blackness. A dozen more tentacles curl themselves about your body and swiftly crush the life out of you. Your adventure ends here, at the bottom of a dark hole, deep in enemy territory.

228

The gorge stretches for close to half a mile before tapering to a narrow cleft where the two ridges meet. The rocks in this area are splattered with some kind of white substance. A short distance above you, on a narrow ledge, you spot what appears to be a nest of sticks and grass. If you want to, you can scale the rocks and investigate (turn to **166**). Otherwise, you return to the other side of Oldbone Gorge and re-enter the cavern (turn to **12**).

229

You refuse to give up any of your precious foods to Courga Rock. Eyes closed, you concentrate on slowing your breathing and focus on connecting with the perilous forces of the Celestial Court. Time passes, but whether it is minutes or hours you do not know. Eventually you begin to sense an otherworldly power. The wind whistles past the stone; you fancy you can hear a faint voice intermingled with it:

Outrageous creature! Such disdain! Such arrogant, self-serving insolence! This pleases us. Your proud countenance deserves plain words. Seek out the red-winged drake of the north-eastern cliffs. Your path will take you deep into the kingdoms of the dead. The sorcerer holds the key to the salvation of your people. Now, take what you wish from here and go with our blessing...

The wind dies away and the voice can no longer be heard. You feel pure energy coursing through your body! Add 2 to your Attack Strength for the next battle you face. You choose an offering from within the stone jaws to take with you as instructed (add the Aardwolf Skin to your *Adventure Sheet*). You leave Courga Rock, pondering the mysterious information you have received. Turn to **204**.

230

You are just able to squeeze past the door and enter a long, dark chamber. Resting in the centre of the room is a large stone sarcophagus, carved into the likeness of a bald man clad in fine robes. A stone table stands beside the tomb. Resting on the table is an ancient leather-bound tome.

Before you can investigate further, a spectral vision appears before you, wreathed in a supernatural green glow. You recognize the spirit as the man carved on the sarcophagus. But where the features of the carving are serene and benevolent, those of the ghost are twisted into a grimace of hatred and madness. The wicked spectre swoops down to attack with ethereal claws!

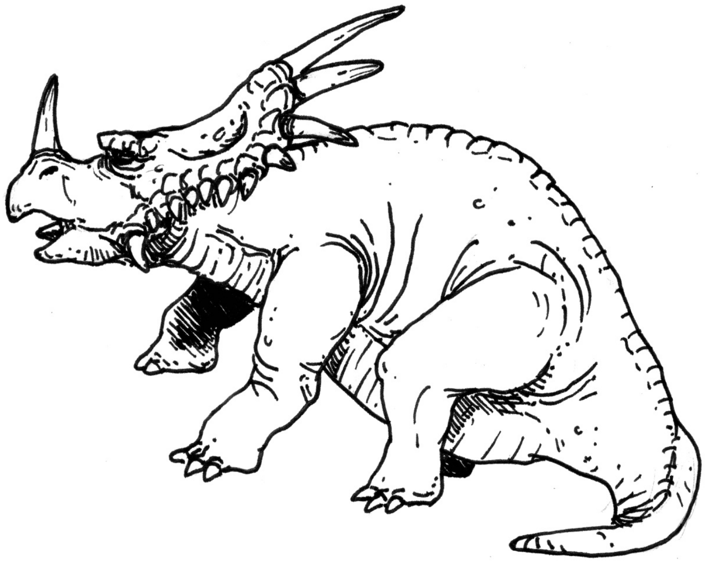
SPECTRE SKILL 10 STAMINA 7

You cannot hope to harm the Spectre unless you possess a magic weapon. If you do not have such a blade you are forced to flee the chamber and explore the other end of the junction; turn to **10** but lose 2 STAMINA points as your enemy inflicts a parting blow.

If you are wielding a magic weapon, fight your opponent as usual. If you win, the spectre gives a final chilling scream before dissipating into nothingness. You pick up the book and flip it open to a page bookmarked with a strip of red velvet. The following ancient words are scrawled across the pages:

> *R qjen bnnw xda ojcn farccnw rw cqn bcjab. Cqn urwn xo Lnunwjbrj fruu ojru jocna cqrach jwm brg vxan trwpb. Fja jwm vjmwnbb jffrc, kdc R fruu ancdaw cx ojln rc!*

Pondering the strange message, you leave the chamber. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **233**.



231

Fortunately, Paru did not descend into the pit with you; he repairs the rope and hauls you out of the hole to safety. Now, if you haven't already done so, you can look in the central hole (turn to **134**), or the hole on the left (turn to **26**). Alternatively you can leave the cavern and return to the entrance chamber (turn to **46**).

232

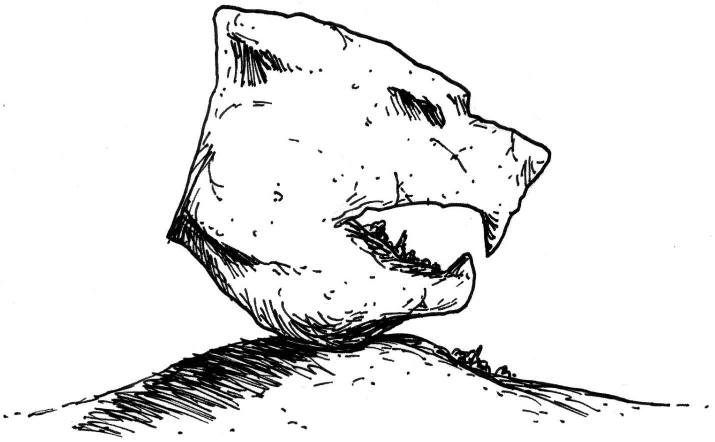
The passage continues unchanged for a time before you encounter a pair of stone doors facing each other. A short distance further on is another pair of doors, and so on, until the tunnel comes to a dead end. There are twenty-six doors in total, thirteen in each wall. The doors have no handles with which to open them and, try as you might, you cannot pull them open.

You notice that two of the doors are slightly ajar, leaving gaps wide enough for you to squeeze through. The door on the left has the symbol XI carved in to its surface; the other on the right is marked with VI. Will you investigate what lies beyond the door on the left (turn to **190**), or the door on the right (turn to **230**)?

If you wish to return to the junction and explore the other end of the passage, add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **10**.

233

You are now back in the passageway. If you haven't done so already, you may see what lies beyond the other open door (turn to **190**). Otherwise you return to the junction and explore the other end of the passage; turn to **10**.



234

There are weapons of all sorts hanging from the wall – swords, axes, halberds, clubs and javelins – all of them rusted and useless. Except, that is, for one gleaming blade that appears to have escaped the ravages of time. The moment you touch the sword, the temperature seems to drop by several degrees. A chilling green mist appears in the tower, coalescing into the hazy shape of an armoured warrior. The ghostly form drifts towards you, bearing a spectral replica of the sword hanging on the wall. 'The power of Thrandeus endures! The Slaver Gem commands me still, beyond death until the end of time!' the spectre moans.

SPECTRE	SKILL 9	STAMINA 9

Reduce your Attack Strength by 2 if you are not carrying a lit torch. Every time the Spectre wins an Attack Round, roll one die. If the result is an odd number you will lose 1 SKILL point in addition to the usual 2 STAMINA points. Unless you are carrying a magic weapon you will not be able to harm the undead apparition. Instead, you must win two consecutive Attack Rounds, after which you will be able to flee up the staircase (turn to **34**).

If you possess a magic weapon and are able to defeat the Spectre, you can claim the sword on the wall for yourself. It is not a magic weapon itself, but its keen blade is undulled by the ages and will inflict 3 STAMINA points of damage instead of the usual 2.

Now, will you explore beyond the doorway if you haven't already done so (turn to **91**), or head back up the staircase (turn to **34**)?

235

The great stone building stands aloft of the other ruins, perched on a wedge of rock that must have been heaved into the sky during the great upheaval that formed the Cauldron. Thick green vines trail down from the stony spike like the tendrils of some unfathomably large monster. It is only by clambering up one of these vines that you are able to reach the mostly intact structure, which is held up by rows of fat stone columns, covered in disturbing tentacled imagery. You ascend wide, cracked steps to a vast, airy entrance hall; golden shafts of daylight penetrate the otherwise gloomy interior through great rents in the ceiling and walls. Strewn throughout the halls are the crumbled remains of stone tables, altars and more columns. Amidst the ruins, eyes firmly fixed on you, stands a bizarre beast.

It stands upright on two long hind legs, balanced by a heavy tail. Sitting atop the creature's short, thick neck is a head crowned by a large rounded dome, edged with bony knobs and small spikes that run down to its beaked muzzle. The strange thickheaded lizard stands over what appears to be a pale humanoid figure, mostly concealed in the rubble.

Will you risk approaching the animal and investigate the figure (turn to **67**), or give it a wide berth and explore the chambers beyond the hall (turn to **181**)?

236

You creep cautiously towards the noise until you are almost on top of it. You part the grass to reveal a small clearing. The yapping is coming from three little bundles of fur that resemble Wolf pups but have yellow-grey fur. You recognize them as GIANT AARDWOLVES, pack hunters that are closely related to Hyenas. Giant Aardwolf young have been raised by your people in the past, and can become quite loyal companions if kept well-fed. Will you attempt to kidnap one of the pups (turn to **168**), or return to your original course (turn to **121**)?

237

Evening approaches swiftly, and it is time you made your way back to Boneridge Village for the completion of the Rite of Banishment. Turn to **214** if you wish to take the most direct route home through a small forest. Turn to **72** if you want to take the longer route home through wilder territory.

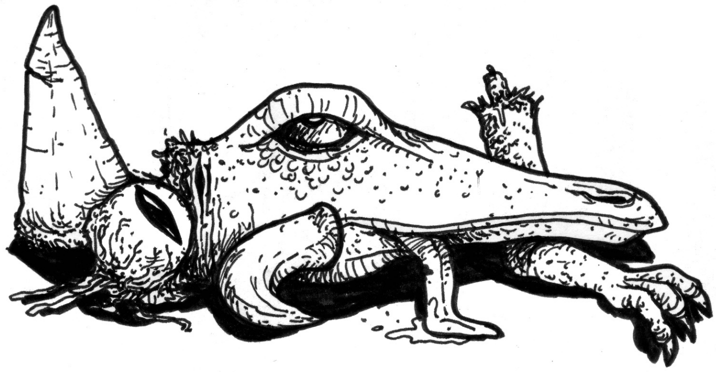
238

Unwittingly you plant your foot right in the centre of the vine snare. Instantly it tightens about your ankle, and you are yanked off your feet and up into the air. At the same time, a humanoid figure bursts out of the bushes, plastered with mud and wielding a fearsome battle-axe. With horror you realise that the wild-looking figure is Wanushu, your tribe's greatest warrior, second-in-command to your fallen chieftain and father of Kuwi!

She cries with happiness at the sight of her father, but they soon turn to screams when she sees his expressionless face and glowing red eyes. Wanushu stalks silently towards her, enthralled by the power of the Slaver Gem. Helplessly you watch as the father cuts down his own daughter. If you have the codeword *Ufes* written down, turn to **245**. Otherwise you can do nothing as the possessed Wanushu uses you for target practice – your adventure ends here.

239

You have barely taken another step when the creature launches itself at you, sprinting across the rubble-strewn floor on its large hind feet. With no time to flee, you hurl yourself out of the path of the charging beast, but it is too quick for you! *Test your Skill*; if you are successful, the bony crest of the animal only clips your side, inflicting 2 STAMINA points of damage. If you are unsuccessful, you take the full brunt of the creature's charge, its horned skull crushing several of your ribs; lose 4 STAMINA points and reduce your Attack Strength by 2. If you are still alive, you stagger to your feet and try to make your escape; turn to **55**.



240

You point the Halcyon Crystal at Longspike; immediately it flares with golden light. The crimson glow slowly fades from the beast's eyes as the magic of the crystal undoes the evil of the Slaver Gem. Calm falls over Longspike, and it lowers its great head in subservience.

Longspike will now accompany you in your journey. Write down the codeword *Ekipsgnol* on your *Adventure Sheet* and note that he has a SKILL of 12 and a STAMINA of 14. When you face an opponent, you can let Longspike fight the battle for you, subtracting from his STAMINA if he loses an Attack Round. If Longspike is killed, you will have to fight the rest of the battle yourself (remember to remove the *Ekipsgnol* codeword from your *Adventure Sheet*).

Riding atop the beast will allow you to proceed with great speed, but there is only room atop him for yourself and Kuwi. If you have either or both of the codewords *Ufes* and *Uhsunaw* written down, you will have to leave your friends behind. Write down the codeword *Deyaled* on your *Adventure Sheet* and note that you will no longer gain the bonus/bonuses they gave to your Attack Strength. If you have the codeword *Otnorb* written down you will have to leave your giant friend behind also, as he is too slow to keep up with Longspike. Now, turn to **116**.

241

The beast is dead at last! It sways unsteadily on its clawed legs, shaking the harness to pieces with its death throes. Finally it topples, crashing to the ground with a resounding boom. Valgrek, who lay sprawled in the dirt, is crushed to death beneath its vast bulk. Turn to **274**.

242

The disturbing rustling dies down and you are able to carefully navigate your way to the other side of the cave. There you find an opening that leads to a much larger chamber.

If you are carrying a lit torch, or wish to light one (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet* if you do), turn to 202. If not, turn to **225**.

243

You are back in the crypt of Thrandeus. Picking an option you haven't yet chosen, will you:

Open the door on the left?	Turn to **247**.
Open the door on the right?	Turn to **262**.
Investigate the tomb of Thrandeus?	Turn to **249**.
Leave the chamber and explore the empty doorways at the end of the passage?	Turn to **246**.

244

Wanushu squats on the ground and outlines his plan in the damp dirt. 'The lake narrows as it flows through a ravine to the south. Sefu and I will chase the beast into the ravine; Kuwi will prevent it from escaping out the other end.' The veteran hunter stabs a finger and you and smiles wryly, 'You have the easiest task of all. Simply climb to the top of ravine, leap on to the creature's back as it passes, and then hope the Crystal works!'

You are not comforted by Wanushu's cheerful attitude. Nevertheless, you head for the ravine with Kuwi as the two hunters wade into the shallow lake and circle behind the Thunder Lizard, weapons at the ready. Suddenly Wanushu charges the enormous beast, screaming at the top of his lungs and swinging his battle-axe above his head. The Thunder Lizard gives a startled grunt and begins to amble away from the noisy little creature at its feet.

Sefu joins in, and soon both of them are running along behind the long-necked titan, whooping wildly and herding the beast towards the ravine. The surprised beast picks up speed as it thunders across the lake, each massive footstep throwing up an explosion of water. You have yet to reach the ravine, and it is with some panic that you realise your prey is catching up to you! You quickly launch into a sprint and hope to reach the pass before the colossal beast.

Roll three dice and *Test your Stamina*. If you are successful, turn to 254. If you are unsuccessful, the Thunder Lizard overtakes you and barrels through the canyon before you can reach it. Kuwi, who was ahead of you, only just manages to throw herself out of the path of the charging giant. Dejected at your failure, you reunite with your companions and continue on your journey to the east; lose 1 LUCK point, add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **250**.

245

Incensed by Kuwi's murder, Sefu leaps to the attack, fiercely trading blows with the enslaved Wanushu. The two warriors inflict terrible wounds upon each other until eventually Wanushu collapses, felled by a vicious blow to the head. Blood streaming from a dozen wounds, Sefu staggers over and, with the last of his strength, cuts you down from the snare. He collapses in your arms, the life swiftly draining out of him. 'At least you didn't get in my way this time,' he smiles weakly. Then he is gone.

You have no time to digest the tragedy that has just unfolded. Valgrek increases his lead with every passing moment. Add 1 to your DELAYS and turn to **272**, but from now on you cannot benefit from the bonuses to your Attack Strength that Kuwi and Sefu gave you.

246

A chill runs through your body as you approach the empty doorways at the end of the passage. You peer into the first one; inside is a bare stone chamber. The second one is the same. You are about to look through the next doorway when a hulking figure emerges from it, reeking of death.

Once upon a time it may have been a human, but now it is a vile, rotting creature trailing strips of putrid flesh. Lank white hair hangs from its diseased scalp and bony jaw. Luminous green slime oozes out of the many ragged tears in the thing's bulk, dripping down and sticking to the floor and walls in gelatinous strands.

'Where is it?' the corpse rumbles with a voice as cold as the grave, 'Where is my precious gem?'

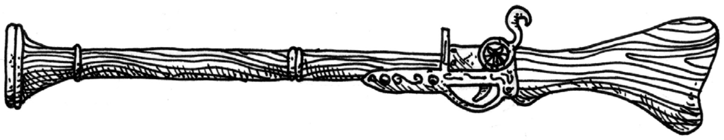
The towering being shambles towards you, ready to suck the life from your body. You face no ordinary undead – this is a fiend possessed of elemental malice and fuelled by its hatred for all living things!

THRANDEUS SKILL 13 STAMINA 18

If you possess the Halcyon Crystal, turn at once to **94**. If not, you must fight for your life against the unholy emperor. If you do not possess a magic weapon there is no hope of victory – the vile thing swiftly skills you.

If Thrandeus wins an Attack Round he will sap 1 SKILL point from you as well as the usual 2 STAMINA points. If he wins two consecutive Attack Rounds he will ensnare you in his grasp and kill you instantly.

If you somehow manage to defeat the undead tyrant, turn to **200** if you have the codeword *Noitacol* written down; if not, turn to **30**.



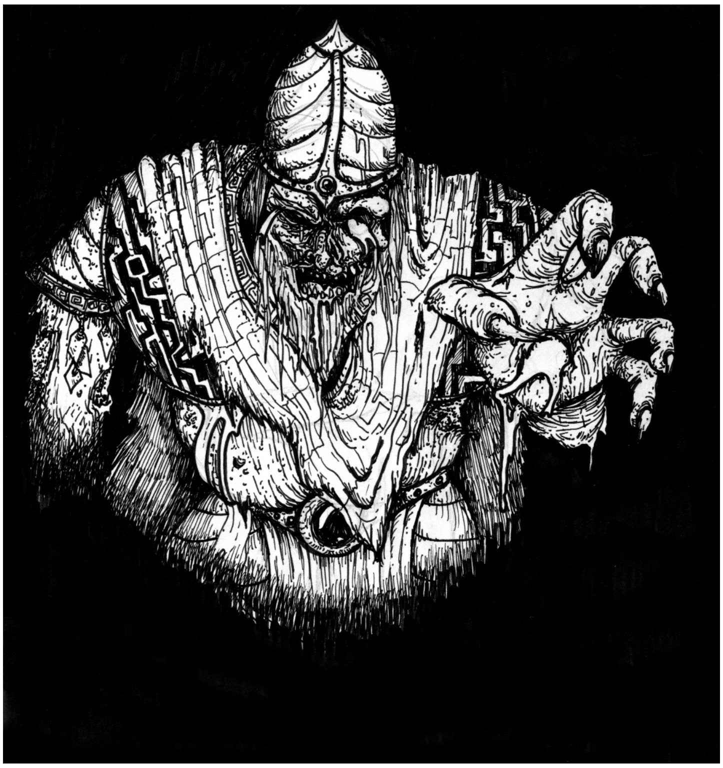
247

Yanking on the iron ring, you pull open the heavy door, revealing a small, narrow chamber. There are only two things in the room. One is another stone sarcophagus, plain and unadorned. The other is the former owner of said sarcophagus – the rotting remains of Andilicus, King's Physician! The undead wretch staggers towards you, bony claws reaching for your throat!

CRYPT STALKER SKILL 8 STAMINA 7

Unless you are armed with a magic weapon, you will not be able to defeat this foe. Fight the battle as normal, except that when you win an Attack Round, no damage is inflicted.

If the Crypt Stalker wins two consecutive Attack Rounds, it will wrap its claws around your neck and throttle you – roll one die and lose that many STAMINA points! Unless you win an Attack Round your opponent will inflict the same damage again each round until you are dead.



If you manage to win two consecutive Attack Rounds, you shove your opponent to the ground, allowing you to escape the room and shut the door behind you; add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **243**.

If you possess a magic weapon and slay the Crypt Stalker, turn to **4**.

248

You strike out west from the village, following the steep, winding track that leads down into Boneridge Valley. It is here that your people tend to the herds of Boneridges that give the valley its name: four-legged, barrel-bodied beasts with a single horn sprouting from their snouts and bony frills around their necks. A few of the beasts stop their grazing for a moment and regard you with vague interest.

A short distance away you spot one of the adult Boneridges slumped on its side. The rest of the herd is giving it a wide berth; this troubles you, as these creatures are usually very attentive to other members of the herd when they are sick or injured. Will you head over to investigate (turn to **103**), or keep heading for the opposite side of the valley (turn to **130**)?

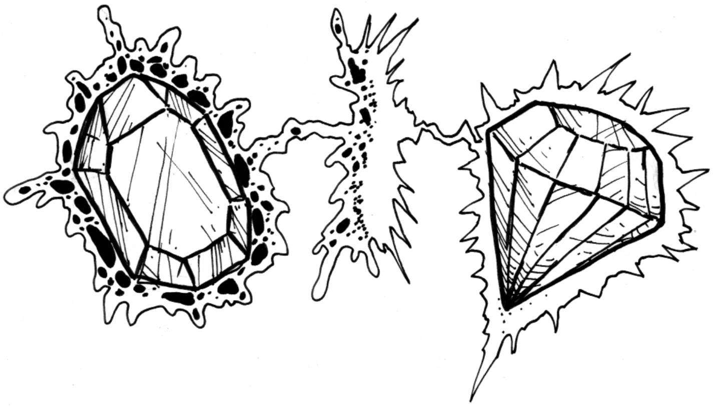
249

The stone tomb is enormous, at least three metres long and a metre wide – far too large for one man. The lid of the tomb is carved with the likeness of Thrandeus – an aged, bearded man with piercing eyes. Between his clasped stone hands is an empty socket where a jewel or stone of some kind has been prised loose.

You push against the lid of the sarcophagus and slowly it grinds aside. A cloud of noxious brown gas bursts from the inside of the tomb, enveloping your head. Before you can help yourself you inhale some of the foul stink. You have contracted Lung Rot, a crippling condition that severely weakens a sufferer in wet or damp areas. Already, here in this chilling crypt, you feel its debilitating effects taking hold (lose 1 SKILL point and 2 STAMINA points; also note that you have Lung Rot on your *Adventure Sheet*).

Eventually the cloud clears and you are able to see inside the king's tomb. It is piled high with more riches: coins, crystals and jewellery – but no body. Evidently the final resting place of Thrandeus was not so final.

There is nothing else of interest in the sarcophagus. Now, choosing an option you haven't chosen before, will you investigate the doors at the back of the chamber (turn to **157**), or leave the room and explore the empty doorways at the end of the passage (turn to **246**)?



250

At last you have reached the eastern rim of the Cauldron. Thankfully there is a narrow pass that ascends to the lip of the valley through which you can reach the plains. Before you can proceed, however, there is one last obstacle to overcome.

Standing before you is a large beast with a bulky body, standing on four short legs. A short tail hangs behind it. A neck frill that is crowned with six long spikes surrounds the head of the animal. A smaller horn extends from each of its cheeks, and a single long horn protrudes from above its beaked nose.

The beast is familiar to you, for it is Longspike, the lifelong companion of your former chieftain, that threw him to his death in a fit of madness. It must have wandered down to the Cauldron after the death of its master, seekng a place where your hunters would not follow.

Longspike stamps the ground with its clawed feet, snorting angrily and tossing about its spiked head. Its hooded eyes radiate a sinister red glow, suggesting that Valgrek has played some part in the beast's enraged state. Longspike is blocking the pass; if you wish to proceed, you will have to defeat it!

STYRACOSAURUS	SKILL 12	STAMINA 14

Each time Longspike wins an Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 1-4 it inflicts the usual 2 points of STAMINA damage. On a roll of 5-6 it will gore with its nose-horn, causing 3 STAMINA points of damage. If you manage to defeat Longspike turn to **116**.

251

The Halcyon Crystal cannot exert its influence this close to the Slaver Gem, and the Tyrant King is unaffected. Return to **261** and continue your fight.

252

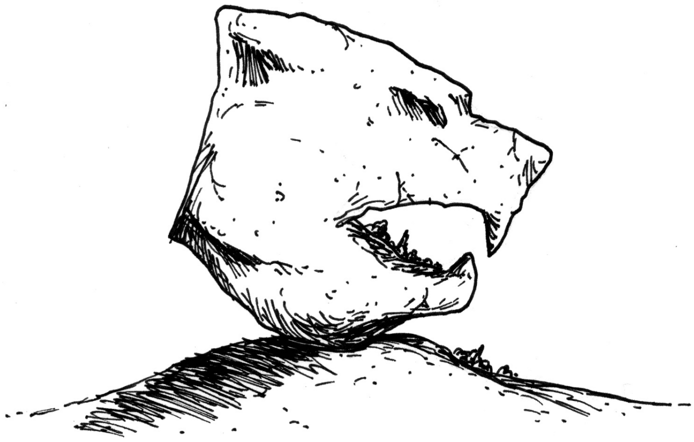
It is customary for your folk to place an offering of food in the jaws of Courga Rock before speaking to the gods. You may wish to leave some of your Provisions here as your own personal offering. Roll one die, adding 1 to the number for each meal you place in the stone jaws (remember to cross them off your *Adventure Sheet*), then turn to the appropriate paragraph below:

2-3	Turn to **213**.
4-5	Turn to **184**.
6 or higher	Turn to **106**.

If you wish to seek advice from the gods without leaving an offering, turn to **229**.

253

You present the Halcyon Crystal before the primitive warriors; immediately its power takes effect, breaking the Oldbones from their magical thraldom. Unfortunately for you, the hairy humanoids continue their attack, even though they are freed from servitude to the Slaver Gem. Apparently tribal feuds die hard – return to **263** and continue the fight.



254

Your legs ache in protest, but the burst of speed has preserved your lead over the charging giant. Without pause you leap onto the rocks and clamber your way up the face of the ravine. You reach the top of the pass just as the Thunder Lizard barrels into the canyon, trumpeting in distress. With your last ounce of energy, you leap off the edge towards the beast's mountainous bulk... *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **220**.

If you are unsuccessful, you land on the Thunder Lizard's back, but the momentum of its charge bounces you off its rubbery hide. You plunge into the shallow water, narrowly avoiding the creature's tree-sized legs as it rumbles past; lose 2 STAMINA points. If you are alive, you dejectedly reunite with your companions and continue on your journey to the east; add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **250**.

255

You forge directly into the swamp, carefully navigating your way across the thin strips of dry land that criss-cross the murky pools. If you have Lung Rot, the damp conditions aggravate your disease - lose 1 SKILL point and 2 STAMINA points. Now roll one die; if the result is a 1-3, turn to **259**. If the result is a 4-6, turn to **126**.

256

Once more you reveal the Halcyon Crystal. The golden light flows from it towards Ogmil, softening his hate-filled face.

'I didn't know what the Gem could do,' he moans, 'Valgrek sent me to the Cauldron to search for it, but I had no idea what he had planned. You have to believe me.'

His expression hardens. 'Still, what's done is done. Master has promised me Kuwi as my bride. We shall be together at long last!'

A dry chuckle, like the rustling of dry parchment, echoes across the plains. 'Fool!' cries Valgrek, seated in his harness atop the terrible Tyrant King, 'The girl will be sold to the Lizard-folk, same as the others. Her unmarked hide will fetch a high price!'

Ogmil stares at the shaman in shocked silence. 'But… you promised me!' he sputters, his features contorting in anger. The apprentice strikes at his winged mount, forcing it up into the air. 'You promised me!' Ogmil screams as he directs the flying reptile towards Valgrek. Before the old shaman can react, the creature swoops down and plucks him from his seat. The beast, master and apprentice ascend into the sky, higher and higher, until there is a blinding flash. All three then plummet from the sky, spiralling through the air before crashing into the hard dirt of the plains. The smoking bodies of Ogmil and his mount lie still, but there is life in Valgrek still! Note the codeword *Nellaf* on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to **264**.

257

The claws of the furious creature snap shut about your torso, squeezing the air from your lungs – lose 2 STAMINA point. If you are still alive, the beast beats its mighty wings and ascends into the air with you firmly in its grasp! You beat at the creature, hoping to loosen its grip on you. Roll one die. If you roll a 1-3, turn to 31. If you roll a 4 or a 5, turn to 78. If you roll a 6, your attempts are futile. The beast flies up to the very rim of the gorge and then releases you. You catch a fleeting glimpse of the rocky highlands and the wide, flat plains of your home before plummeting into the gorge to your death. Your adventure ends here.

258

Summoning up your remaining reserves of strength, you pull on the jaws of the trap with all of your might. Sweat pours down your face with the exertion but, try as you might, it will not budge. In the end, you are completely spent and give up. In the distance you hear the yapping of dogs. You grab your weapon and scan the horizon. Three WILD DOGS bound towards you, their scrawny bodies covered in patchy tan fur. You must fight them all at the same time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First WILD DOG	6	4
Second WILD DOG	4	4
Third WILD DOG	5	5

Reduce your Attack Strength by 2 for the duration of this battle as your foot is still caught in the trap. If you are victorious, you collapse by the bodies of the dogs and rest. An hour later you try once more to open the trap. At first it will not budge but then, fraction-by-fraction, it begins to yield. Soon the trap is opened wide enough for you to slip your foot free of it. Your ankle is badly cut and bruised, but thankfully nothing appears to be broken. Still, it is painful to walk on and you will be limping until it starts to heal; reduce your SKILL by 1 point until you return to Boneridge Village. Turn to **9**.

259

The narrow bank of earth you are travelling along ends abruptly at a wide, stagnant mere. A row of smooth, slime-covered rocks sit in the still water like the backs of some bottom-feeding monsters. Your only hope of crossing the lake is to leap across the stones to where the dry land emerges once more. If this sounds too risky, you can backtrack and take another path (turn to **126**, but add 1 to your DELAYS score). If you wish to continue you ready yourself to leap onto the nearest rock.

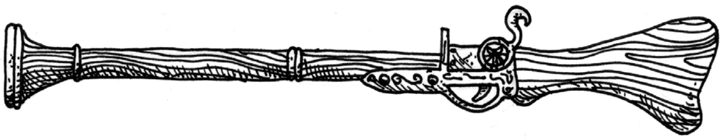
You will have to cross six rocks before you reach the other side. *Test your Skill* to see if you land safely on the first rock. If you are successful, you must *Test your Skill* again to see if you land on the second rock, and so on, until you have cleared all six rocks.

If you fail any of the rolls, you slip on the slimy surface and plunge into the stale water. The struggle back to dry land costs you some valuable time – add 1 to your DELAYS score each time you fail a roll. If you failed the roll on one of the first three rocks, you swim back to where you started and must attempt the cross again with the first rock. If you fail on one of the last three rocks, you swim to the far side.

Add 1 to your LUCK if you successfully cross all six stones. Turn to **110** when you have crossed all the rocks or swam to the far side.

260

Your blow strikes home and dislodges the Slaver Gem. The moment it falls free, its evil hold over the Tyrant King is broken. The red glow fades from the creature's gaze as it slowly recovers its wits. Released from its magical bondage, the terrible beast roars in fury and shakes its harness loose. It then turns from you and stalks towards Valgrek, who lies sprawled in the dirt. Even the shaman's most powerful spell cannot hope to defend against the anger of the Tyrant King; he is gobbled up in one terrible bite and swallowed whole. Revenged for its enslavement, the monster strides away into the open plains where it can reign supreme once more. Turn to **274**.



261

Valgrek may have been dismounted from the Tyrant King, but the fearsome carnivore remains under the malign influence of the Slaver Gem. Then you see it, fastened into a harness that sits about the monster's head. The evil artefact pulses with the same fell light that emanates from the creature's eyes. If you were to get your hands on the Gem you may be able to undo its magic. Armed with this knowledge, you prepare to fight for your life!

TYRANNOSAURUS REX	SKILL 13	STAMINA 25

If you are mounted on either Longspike or the Thunder Lizard, it will aid you in your battle, as will your companions. Each time the Tyrannosaurus Rex wins an Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, it attacks your mount (if you have one; if not, it attacks you). On a roll of 3-5 it attacks you. On a roll of 6 it attacks your companion/s (if you still have one; if not, it attacks you). The Tyrant King's massive bite inflicts 4 STAMINA points of damage on a successful attack; if your companion is attacked they will be so badly wounded that they will not be able to help you any further and you can no longer benefit from the bonus they gave to your Attack Strength.

If you win two consecutive Attack Rounds you can attempt to strike a blow at the Slaver Gem; turn to **54**. After six Attack Rounds have passed, make a note of how much STAMINA the Tyrannosaurus still has and turn to **153**.

262

It takes all your strength to open the door, but eventually it loosens and swings open. Behind it is a small, plain room with a small, plain sarcophagus, and little else.

Suddenly an apparition blinks into life beside you, glowing a pale, icy blue. It is the ghost of a tall man with a long black beard, clad in the flowing robes of a wizard. The spirit sweeps towards you, eyes blazing with cold fire!

Will you defend yourself (turn to **139**), or try to reason with the long-dead sorcerer (turn to **269**)?

263

The wily old shaman sees your approach and orders two enslaved Oldbone warriors to attack. They lumber silently towards you, hefting heavy clubs. You must fight them both at the same time:

First NEANDERTHAL	SKILL 7	STAMINA 8
Second NEANDERTHAL	SKILL 8	STAMINA 8

If you are victorious, turn to **266**.

264

The Tyrant King, supreme lord of all carnivores in the Plain of Bones, now stands before you. The monster stands some five metres high on two large and powerful hind limbs. A long, heavy tail swings behind it. Two tiny forelimbs extend from his chest; above these, a short, muscular neck connects to the creature's massive head, the jaws of which are lined with curved, dagger-like teeth.

The killing machine steps towards you, ready to tear you limb from limb. If you have written down the codeword *Nellaf*, turn to **261**. If not, turn to **169**.

265

Bloodied but still standing, the Threehorn thrusts once more; this time its long horns get in under the carnivore's defences and puncture its belly. Mortally wounded, the defeated aggressor staggers away to die, blood pouring from the ragged gore-wounds. The victorious Threehorn trots back to its herd, braying in victory.

Relieved to have survived the epic battle yourself, you find the start of the track that leads down to the Cauldron and begin your descent. Turn to 33.

266

Valgrek glares at you from the harness affixed to his monstrous mount. 'Wretched hunter, you are no different to the rest of those muscle-bound fools. Real strength lies in magic, not physical strength! It is I that should have led the tribe, not some dim-witted warrior-chieftain. Now you will all pay the price for your ignorance!'

You close in on the evil shaman and his monstrous mount. Before you can reach him however, a great flying reptile intercepts you. It descends from the clear sky and lands in front of you; its beady eyes burn with the red flame of the Slaver Gem's influence. Sitting astride the broad-winged beast is Ogmil. 'I told you I would looks after things,' he grins slyly.

You move forward to end his pitiful life once and for all. You must fight Ogmil and his flying mount at the same time.

OGMIL	SKILL 7	STAMINA 7
PTERANODON	SKILL 8	STAMINA 9

If the Pteranodon wins an Attack Round it will buffet you with its wings, inflicting the usual 2 points of STAMINA damage but also reducing your Attack Strength by 1 for the next Attack Round. If you win, turn to **264**.

267

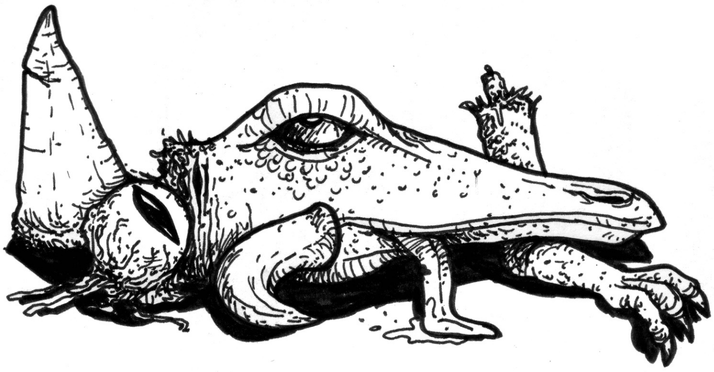
The path takes you into a narrow pass wedged between two steep-sided hills. The tops of the hills are crowned with tight thickets of towering heavenstip trees. Nesting in the tall trees are groups of Wingfingers who hiss and squawk at your approach through their narrow, elongated jaws.

As you enter the pass, the winged reptiles become more agitated, chattering to each other and rustling their claw-tipped, membranous wings. Unbeknownst to you, many of the creature's nests hold newly-born young, and they see your intrusion as a threat to their children. A cluster of Wingfingers suddenly drops from their branches and swoop towards you.

PTERODACTYLS SKILL 8

You cannot hope to defeat the entire flock; instead you must sprint to far end of the pass and hope that they give up their attack once you have left their territory. Roll one die – the result is how many Attack Rounds you must fight against the Wingfingers. If your opponents win an Attack Round, they inflict the normal 2 points of STAMINA damage with their toothy beaks and sharp claws; if you win an Attack Round, you have merely fended off the flock for the moment.

Luckily your hunch is right, and the winged beasts leave you alone the moment you exit the pass. Add 1 to your DELAYS score and turn to **32**.



268

Your pace quickens as home finally comes into view, but Paru hangs back. 'You go on ahead,' he mutters, 'I'm no leader.' No matter what you say, you can't change his mind. Begrudgingly you continue on without him (from now on Paru cannot help you fight your battles). Now turn to **203**.

269

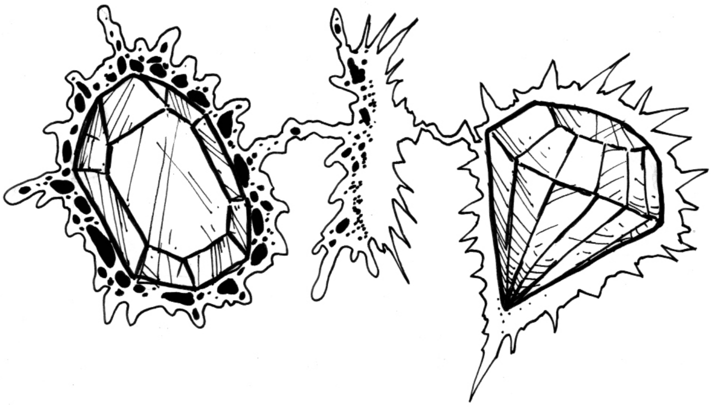
'So!' croaks the spectral sorcerer, 'another has come, and so soon.' You keep your distance from the ethereal vision, ready to fight or flee at a split second's notice.

'Do not fear me,' intones the ghost, 'I mean you no harm. I am Vendictus, the court sorcerer of that abominable tyrant, Thrandeus. This whole valley was once the empire of Celenasia, the jewel of southern Allansia. For centuries it was a paragon of civilisation, unrivalled in its advances of science, magic and learning. That was until Thrandeus ascended to the throne. Petty and small-minded, he sought personal wealth and power above all else. The people suffered patiently under his cruel reign, for he was the emperor, descended of the divine. That was until he discovered the Portal.

Thrandeus delved deep into the earth in his pursuit of precious metals and stones, but no diamond or emerald could rival the value of the Slaver Gem, found at the foot of a mysterious gateway many leagues below ground. He quickly discovered that the Gem is possessed of incredible magic that can be used to dominate the wills of others, effectively enslaving their minds under his control.

Corrupted by its dark power, Thrandeus turned the Slaver Gem against his own people, forcing the citizens of the empire to live and die according to his whims and wants. Some resisted, and so began the Celenasian War. After much bloodshed, Thrandeus was overthrown and entombed with his cursed gem in this very crypt. Tragically, the damage that had been done was too great, and Celenasia was devoured by the earth for its sins.'

Vendictus trails off into silence, his ghostly features consumed with sadness. Add 1 to your DELAYS score. If you wish to continue listening to the wizard's ramblings, turn to **96**. If you would rather not waste any more time, you interrupt the spirit and ask for its help, turn to **75**.



270

A small group of Threehorns are grazing near the cliff's edge, intently clipping the grass with their beaked mouths. They are so dedicated to their task that they do not even raise their frilled heads as you approach them.

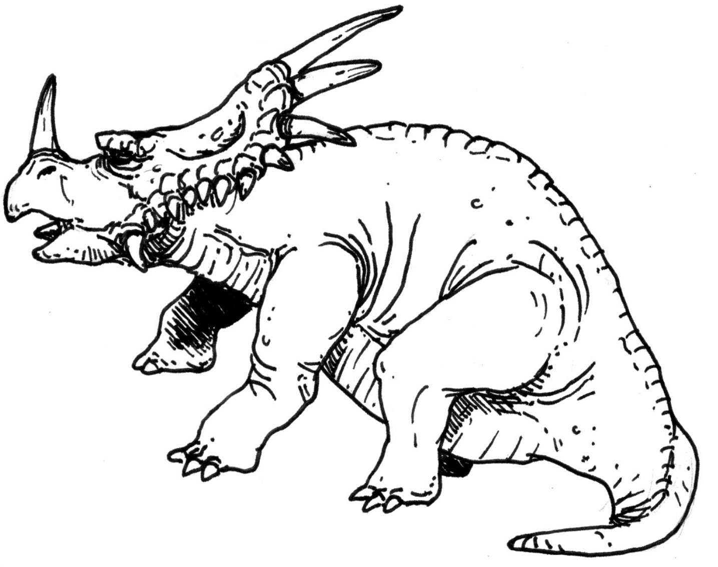
A furious roar echoes out over the valley as a savage predator suddenly bursts out from a clump of nearby trees, charging towards the Threehorns on two powerful legs. The horned herbivores do not fail to react to *this* intruder; they bellow warnings to each other and instinctively form a protective circle around their weaker members.

You keep your distance and watch as the savage carnivore singles out a Threehorn and drives it away from the herd – directly towards you! You quickly back away from the battling beasts, only to find the cliffs blocking off your only avenue of escape. The two adversaries, predator and prey, continue their brutal fight to the death, the Threehorn thrusting with its deadly horns and the predator snapping back with slavering, teeth-filled jaws.

If you have the codeword *Ufes* written down, turn to **217** at once. If not, you must fight out the epic battle between the two titans.

	SKILL	STAMINA
TRICERATOPS	12	10
CERATOSAURUS	11	14

If the Triceratops wins, turn to **265**. If the Ceratosaurus wins, turn to **143**.



271

You feel no different as you place the metal band to your head, but in time its power will become apparent. You are wearing the Circlet of Hamaskis, a magical item that will allow you to understand any language in spoken or written form. If you come across any writing in the future, you can call upon the power of the Circlet. Use the decipher key below to unscramble any messages:

Scrambled letter:
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Unscrambled letter:
J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I

Make a note of this paragraph number so that you can return to it and reference this key in the future. Note also that as you are wearing this item on your head it does not take up a place in your rucksack. Now return to **223**.

272

Your path is soon blocked by a vast swampland that stretches all the way to the rim of the Cauldron. The most direct route is straight through the reed-choked fens, but it is also the path most fraught with danger.

The alternative is to backtrack and take the longer, but safer path through the woods to the north-east. Will you cut through the swamp (turn to **255**), or take the longer route through the forest (turn to **76**)?

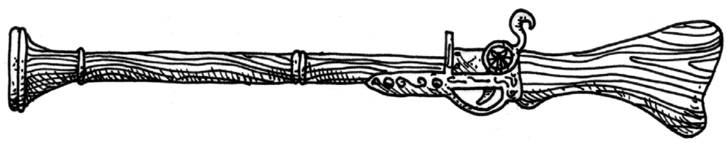
273

You place your trophies upon the altar and beseech the spirits of your ancestors to help you in your quest. At first silence is the only response, but then a strong breeze blows into the tent, causing the walls to ripple and a stack of Valgrek's papers to swirl into the air. You fancy you can hear voices on the wind, incredibly faint but whispering as one with the combined wisdom of the ages.

'Save them... you must save our people... your heart is true but your spirit is lacking... but you are the only hope.'

The charcoal map on the side of the tent begins to glow, its once-black lines now shining brilliantly in gold. The glow starts in the spot where Boneridge Village is marked out; it then moves southwards, tracing a path to a large, roughly circular area deep in the south of the Plain of Bones.

'Seek that which will free them from slavery... you must save them...' The glow fades from the map and the voices die away on the breeze. You have your answer. Turn to **87**.



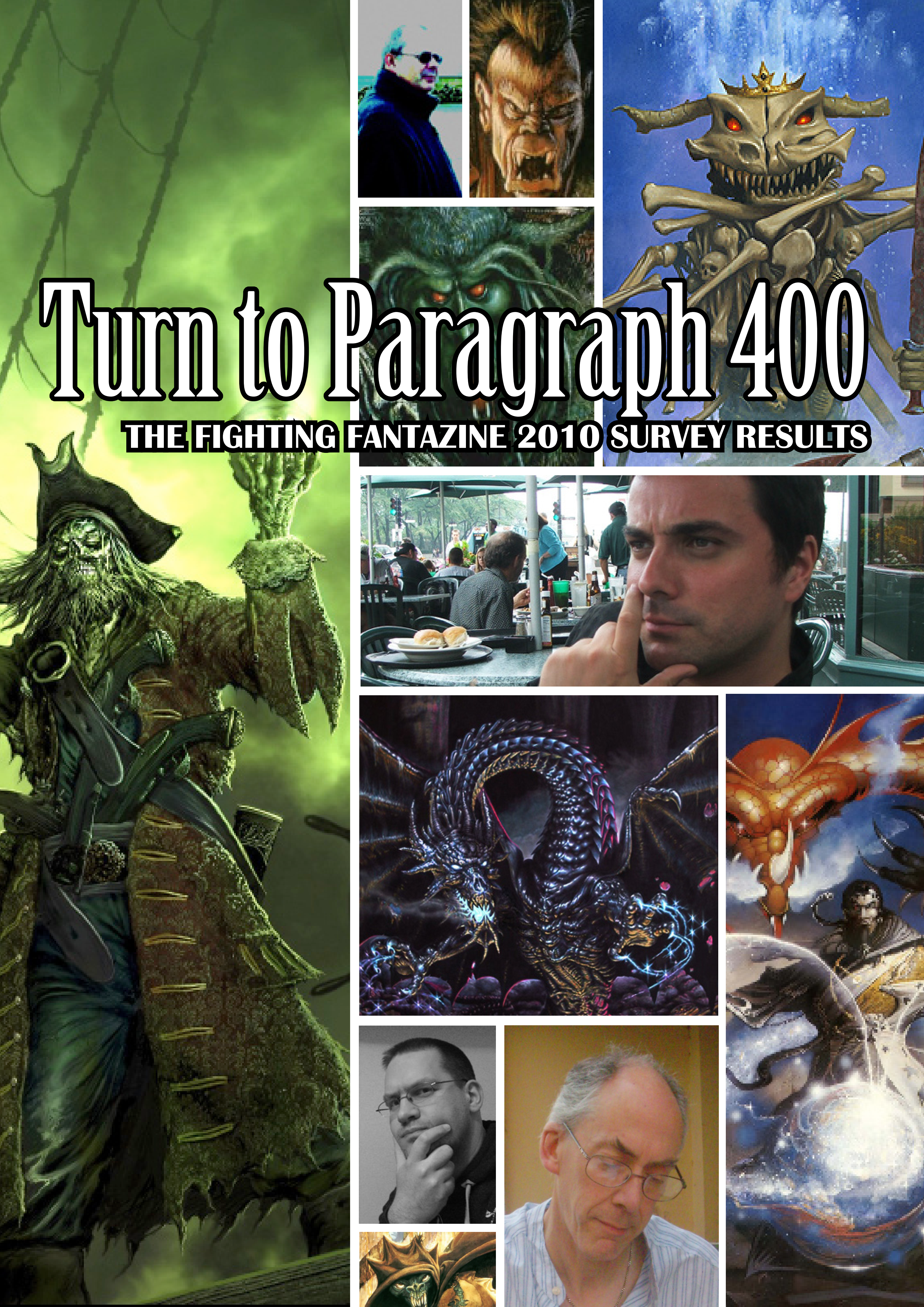
274

With Valgrek's death, the influence of the Slaver Gem is broken once and for all. The Oldbone warriors drop their weapons and run screaming into the wilderness. The enslaved beasts that were pulling the prison cages wrench out of their yokes and lumber away, shaking out the last vestiges of dark magic from their frilled heads.

You find the evil artefact lying in the dirt and pick it up. Its pulsing red light slowly fades until you are holding a harmless lump of grey stone. Tossing it over your shoulder, you set to work on freeing your people from the cages.

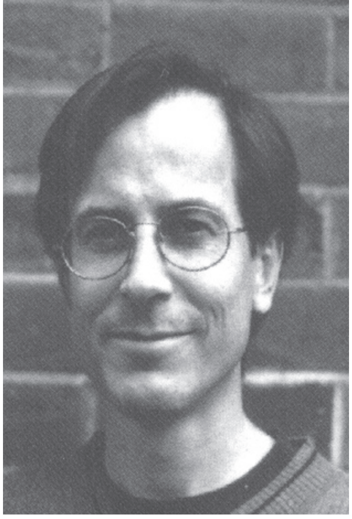
Soon the Boneridge tribe is reunited once more. They gather around you and listen as you recall your amazing adventure, from the sun-scorched northern plains to the cold, lifeless tombs of Celenasia. At the conclusion of your incredible story, the entire tribe is in agreement – YOU are declared the next warrior-chieftain of the tribe! The Rite of Banishment has ended at last. You begin the long journey back home, the entire tribe united under your leadership.

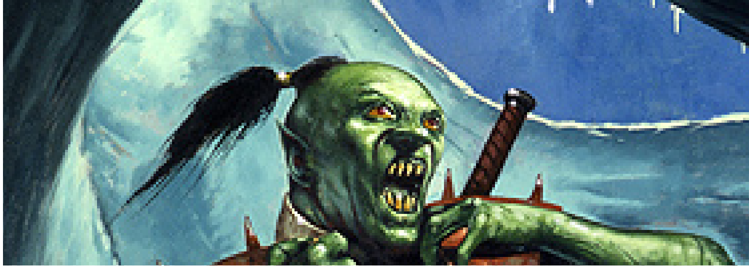
The End.

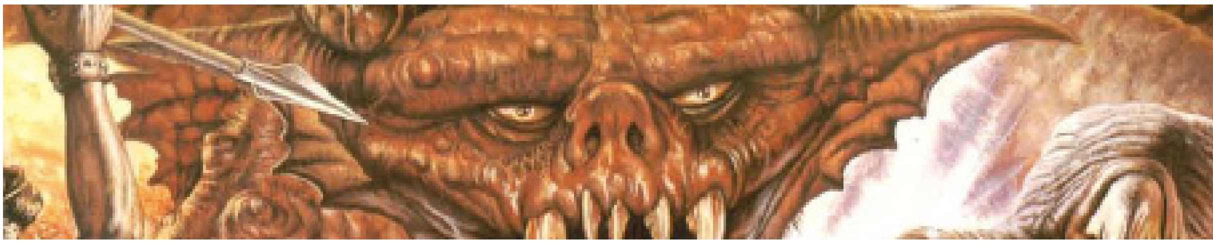


Turn to Paragraph 400

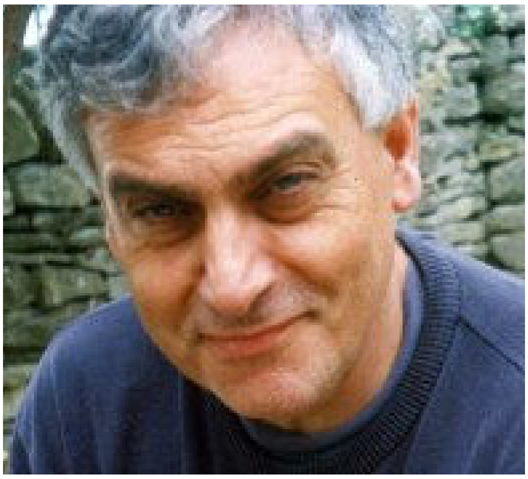
THE FIGHTING FANTAZINE 2010 SURVEY RESULTS



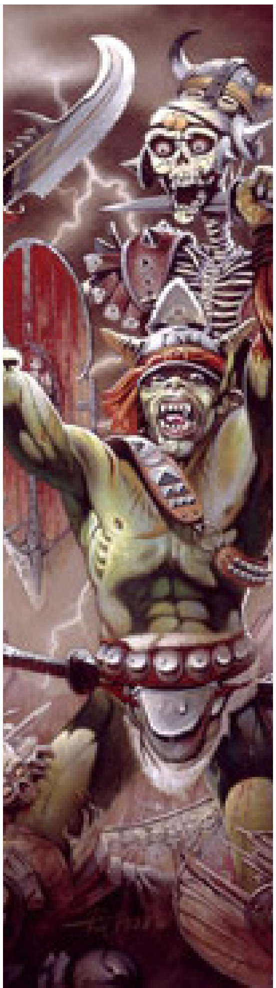




Taking up a large chunk of this issue is the results from the survey of fan opinion undertaken in mid-2010. While the survey also polled readers about the novels, RPGs, mini-adventures, the fan magazine, monsters, villains, writers and artists, all of that has to wait till next time. To begin, Alexander Ballingall guides YOU through the first part of the results, the ranking of the standard gamebooks from the worst of the worst in 70th spot to the dizzying heights of first place...



Way back in *Fighting Fantazine* 3, we asked you to rate every single *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook between 1 (complete rubbish!) and 10 (top of the pops!) on four different scales. Readers were only asked to vote on those books they had read and could give an honest opinion on, with a proportionate tally being used to keep the playing field level so that obscure titles such as much-overlooked *Clash of the Princes* might have a chance against the far better known *Deathtrap Dungeon*.



Meanwhile, the four scales were explained as the following: 'Plot' was how interesting a tale was being spun by the writer, 'Gameplay' was how well the game mechanics had been balanced, 'Atmosphere' was how well the writer had written the book, and 'Illustrations' was how well the cover and interior art served the book. These four marks were then used to determine an overall score for each book in order to create the table of rankings presented here.

The rankings have been broken down into blocks of twenty, with the top ten placing books having a section of their own where each has an essay penned by one of ten different fans, each essay singing the praises of the book in question. As well as this, there is also smaller sections for each block of twenty, looking at the book range as a whole and drawing a few interesting conclusions, along with a few quotes from reviews by Per Jorner to spice things up.

But, for now, you are presented in reverse order with the gamebooks as YOU voted for them...

Places 70-51

From Aliens to Elves: Numbers 70 to 51...

Here we are with the bottom twenty books of the series, stretching from Aarok to Sardath in their apparently infinite awfulness. These are the books most likely to be left on the shelf when a *Fighting Fantasy* fan is in the mood to play an adventure. So, what can we find hidden in this grab bag of unwanted escapades?

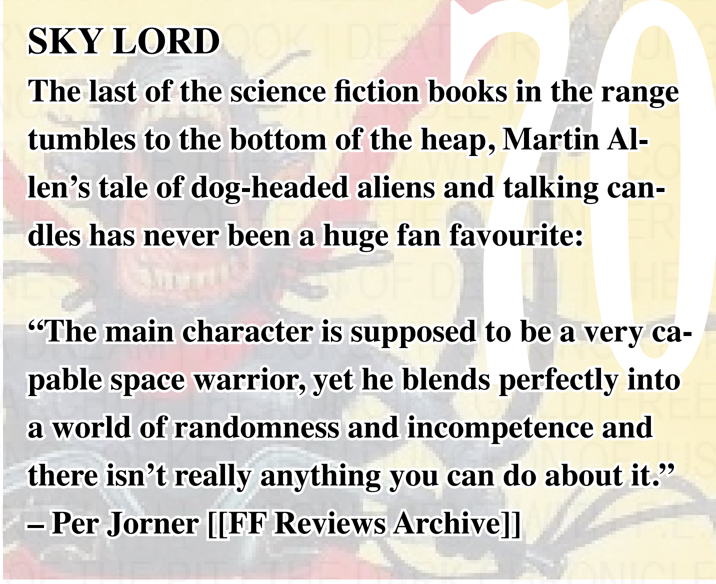
For starters, a good third of the bottom twenty places are swallowed whole by the science fiction sub-genre of the range, with only one title escaping into the next twenty (this is excluding the borderline science fiction tales of *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* and *Spectral Stalkers*). Of these books sulking away at the bottom of the table, *Freeway Fighter* (#58) appears to rise above the rest, perhaps because it was penned by series cocreator Ian Livingstone more than any particular outstanding feature germane to the book itself. A sort of 'party loyalty' vote then...

In placing last, science fiction tale *Sky Lord* manages this feat by rating a whole 4% lower than the next ranked book. In particular it was let down by its 'Gameplay' score of just 3.80 out of 10! The only other significant 'jump in quality' of a similar size are the gap between *Starship Traveller* (#69) and next place getter *The Warrior's Way* (#68), and between *The Forest of Doom* (#54) and *Stealer of Souls* (#53) in this same batch of books. These two science fiction tales at the bottom of the heap are then the unloved of the unloved, and the only two books not to squeak past the 50% mark.

Next, early writer for the series Andrew Chapman is unfortunate enough to suffer from having *all five* of his books in the bottom twenty titles, with only his non-two-player fantasy adventure *Seas of Blood* (#52) threatening to make it into the next twenty. The two-player *Clash of the Princes* books do particularly badly (#66 and #68), although you will have to decide for yourselves if it was the two-player concept that caused the books to place so badly, or if it simply is that the books are bad and have unfairly tarnished the two-player concept.

Then again, Chapman's not the only one with a bad debut book, with Martin Allen (*The Warrior's Way*), Luke Sharp (*Star Strider*), the US Steve Jackson (*Scorpion Swamp*), Keith Martin (*Stealer of Souls*) and Keith P. Phillips (*Siege of Sardath*) all having their first (and in some cases only) book here in the bottom twenty. And while cocreators Livingstone and Steve Jackson both have books at the other end of the rankings (as we shall see), they both feature in the bottom twenty as well...

One of Livingstone's lower placing titles is *Eye of the Dragon*, marking Wizard Books only poorly ranking entry in the series. Their next lower placing title is *Night of the Necromancer* at thirty-first equal, while from the Puffin run only two titles from post-1988 (the last seven years of the original series) appear in the bottom of the charts: *Siege of Sardath* (#51) and *Deathmoor* (#60).

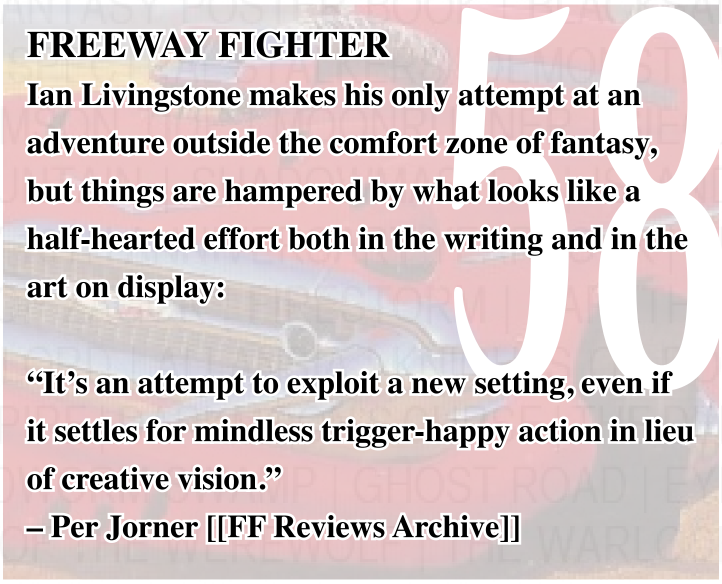


SKY LORD

The last of the science fiction books in the range tumbles to the bottom of the heap, Martin Allen's tale of dog-headed aliens and talking candles has never been a huge fan favourite:

"The main character is supposed to be a very capable space warrior, yet he blends perfectly into a world of randomness and incompetence and there isn't really anything you can do about it."
– Per Jorner [[FF Reviews Archive]]

70	Sky Lord	42.3%
69	Starship *Traveller*	46.9%
68	The Warrior's Way	50.7%
67	Chasms of Malice	50.9%
66	The Warlock's Way	51.1%
65	Star Strider	52.3%
64	Eye of the Dragon	52.7%
63	Space Assassin	53.4%
62	The Rings of Kether	53.5%
61	Robot Commando	54.3%
60	Deathmoor	57.3%
59	Scorpion Swamp	57.5%
58	Freeway Fighter	58.4%
57	Masks of Mayhem	59.6%
56	Fangs of Fury	59.8%
55	Crypt of the Sorcerer	60.8%
54	The Forest of Doom	61.1%
53	Stealer of Souls	65.0%
52	Seas of Blood	65.5%
51	Siege of Sardath	65.8%



FREEWAY FIGHTER

Ian Livingstone makes his only attempt at an adventure outside the comfort zone of fantasy, but things are hampered by what looks like a half-hearted effort both in the writing and in the art on display:

"It's an attempt to exploit a new setting, even if it settles for mindless trigger-happy action in lieu of creative vision."
– Per Jorner [[FF Reviews Archive]]

Places 50-31

From Destruction to Doom: Numbers 50 to 31...

What to make of the next bunch, which are close to the middle of the pack? This lot cover such a narrow spread of scores (just under 4% separates the lot) and encompasses the average of all the gamebooks (67.8% which lies between *Island of the Undead*/*Master of Chaos* and *Island of the Lizard King*). It also steals the mode placing for most titles with the same score, four varied adventures from four different writers all scoring 66.3%.

Early consultant editor, Robin Waterfield, scores the highest placing science fiction tale with *Rebel Planet* in fortieth equal, which coincidentally is also his highest placing title out of his four contributions to the series. Meanwhile, how does the sub-genre do overall? The average score for the science-fiction books is a low 55.5%, quite some distance from the series overall average in what would be 61st place.

Fellow consultant editor of the series Marc Gascoigne also appears in this group (#45=), although not placing as well as Waterfield's debut. His effort however does join the three others in the mode score, placing it within reach of the series average. He has greater luck with his *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* books and manuals as will be seen next issue.

On the subject of average, how does series progenitor *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* do? The original book of the series, and effectively the baseline by which every other book is compared, clocks in at forty-forth place (66.5%) which, like *Battleblade Warrior* (#45=), is close to the range average.

Like Waterfield, this group marks the highest spot for Luke Sharp, his third adventure *Daggers of Darkness* clocking in at 42nd, and the lowest placing for Paul Mason, his most recent title for the series, *Magehunter*, taking 43rd. Prolific writer Jonathan Green has his lowest ranking book, *Curse of the Mummy*, sitting on the series mode score of 66.3%, while his newest book, and the most recent entry in the range, just misses out on the top 30 books by coming in at 31st equal (ranking the same as his second effort for the series).

Return to Firetop Mountain scores slightly better than its predecessor, up four places with 66.9%. Other Livingstone sequels chart at 45th equal, 39th, and 38th. Meanwhile, the other sequel in the group, *The Crimson Tide*, is notable for being impossible to complete without cheating due to an error early in the game. Despite this, the adventure in question was not given a 'Gameplay' score very different from what it received in the other three attributes, leaving it to place 34th.

If one was to, once more, divide the series in half (the seven years up to and including 1988 and the seven years post-1988) only nine titles here come from the post-1988 period, meaning that as with the previous group the bulk of the placings are taken by older titles. This does lend some credence to the idea that fans in general prefer the later output despite the "classics" of the earlier period.

TOWER OF DESTRUCTION

Keith Martin delivers a by-the-numbers adventure, making for an odd tale that relies perhaps more on a good SKILL score than anything else:

"[Tower of Destruction] has an almost Moorcockian touch to it, both in the nature and magnitude of the Threat To All and in the way the Ice Palace feels very alien, very removed from your regular Titan."

– Per Jorner [[FF Reviews Archive]]

50

50	Tower of Destruction	65.9%
49	Demons of the Deep	66.2%
	Curse of the Mummy	66.3%
	Battleblade Warrior	66.3%
	Phantoms of Fear	66.3%
45=	Temple of Terror	66.3%
44	The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	66.5%
43	Magehunter	66.7%
42	Daggers of Darkness	66.8%
	Return to Firetop Mountain	66.9%
40=	Rebel Planet	66.9%
39	Armies of Death	67.0%
38	Caverns of the Snow Witch	67.4%
	Island of the Undead	67.7%
36=	Master of Chaos	67.7%
35	Island of the Lizard King	68.8%
34	The Crimson Tide	69.4%
33	The Citadel of Chaos	69.6%
	Night of the Necromancer	69.8%
31=	Knights of Doom	69.8%

ISLAND OF THE LIZARD KING

Coming middle of the poll is Livingstone's fourth book of the range, and it is arguably his most pedestrian of adventures, with a very linear story and few memorable encounters:

"I don't know if the problem is that the setting Livingstone chose to exploit for this one – the sub-tropical island – is too uninteresting, or if the encounters are just too routine in their design."

– Per Jorner [[FF Reviews Archive]]

35

Places 30-11

From Books to Alephs: Numbers 30 to 11...

It seems that Peter Darvill-Evans is the standout author of this section, all three of his outings in the world of *Fighting Fantasy* make it into the top thirty. In fact, his lowest placing is 16th with his first effort *Beneath Nightmare Castle*, and with *Portal of Evil* at 14th and *Spectral Stalkers* at 11th, that makes him a remarkably consistent writer. Only Stephen Hand does better, his lowest placing book being his first effort, with co-author Jim Bambra, *Dead of Night* sitting in 13th place. There will be more analysis of author rankings next issue when we compare the votes for favourite author against the average scores seen here...

Speaking of first efforts, this batch features the largest number of debut offerings from writers: Jim Bambra & Stephen Hand (*Dead of Night*), Peter Darvill-Evans (*Beneath Nightmare Castle*), Graeme Davis (*Midnight Rogue*), Dave Morris (*The Keep of the Lich-Lord*), Paul Mason & Steve Williams (*Slaves of the Abyss*), Jamie Thomson & Mark Smith (*Talisman of Death*), and Jonathan Green (*Spellbreaker*). Of these, almost all had the advantage of already writing material, in some capacity, for the fantasy games industry, with only Jonathan Green lacking such a background; *Spellbreaker* being his first piece of paid writing.

As per the previous batch of titles, some sequels have appeared. Steve Jackson's *The Seven Serpents* does the best of them in 15th place (although not as well as the rest of the *Sorcery!* series as we shall see), with the third title in the Zagor trilogy, *Legend of Zagor* placing 29th; the best showing for a book from that trilogy. The rerun of slaying Count Heydrich puts in a credible showing at 26th and the second trip through Deathtrap Dungeon does slightly better in 20th position; neither do as well as their predecessors however.

Spectral Stalkers and *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* mark the highest placings for non-fantasy adventures, *Stalkers* missing out on a top ten placing by less than 2%. That both are unconventional offerings suggests that fans are simply not keen on pure science fiction adventures as opposed to a blanket dislike of anything non-fantasy.

This bunch is pretty evenly balanced between earlier titles and post-1988 material (9:11); *City of Thieves* as the oldest title in this group does well in placing 17th. *Stormslayer* meanwhile is the most recent title in this bunch and manages 23rd equal. As suggested before, this does lean towards the idea that later titles are generally considered to be better overall by fans whilst not discounting the gems of the earlier period.

Finally, the most popular construction is three word titles (*The Warrior's Way*) with the majority of a 'X of Y' ilk (*Daggers of Darkness*). Constituting almost half of the books in the range, they score an average of 36th place. The second most popular construction is the four word titles ,which are usually either 'X of the Y' (*Eye of the Dragon*) or 'The X of Y' (*The Citadel of Chaos*). They have an average of 12th place and notably the top three books are all four-word titles...

APPOINTMENT WITH F.E.A.R.

27

Steve Jackson pushes the genre, paragraph number, skill set and plotting boundaries with his second-to-last book. The adventure that results is a mix of success and failure with respect to these pushed boundaries, but uniquely Jackson in execution:

"Steve Jackson once again created something original with a high puzzle factor."
– Per Jorner [[FF Reviews Archive]]

30	Spellbreaker	70.2%
29	Legend of Zagor	70.5%
28	Talisman of Death	70.8%
27	Appointment with F.E.A.R.	71.1%
26	Revenge of the Vampire	71.3%
	Stormslayer	72.3%
	Bloodbones	72.3%
23=	Slaves of the Abyss	72.3%
22	The Keep of the Lich-Lord	72.5%
21	Sword of the Samurai	73.1%
20	Trial of Champions	73.3%
19	Midnight Rogue	73.7%
18	Night Dragon	74.8%
17	City of Thieves	75.0%
16	Beneath Nightmare Castle	75.2%
15	The Seven Serpents	75.3%
14	Portal of Evil	75.8%
13	Dead of Night	76.4%
12	Black Vein Prophecy	76.8%
11	Spectral Stalkers	76.9%

SPECTRAL STALKERS

11

Peter Darvill-Evans final outing is his most popular, trying something different in a range that by that point was now standard fantasy adventures on the world of Titan:

"[Darvill-Evans] has prepared a different experience without losing his grip on the FF fundamentals. The worlds in which you make brief sojourns are darkly entertaining, though of necessity lacking in depth."
– Per Jorner [[FF Reviews Archive]]

Top 10

PLOT

#70	Eye of the Dragon	42.5%
#10	Deathtrap Dungeon	77.6%
#9	Slaves of the Abyss	79.1%
#8	Legend of the Shadow Warriors	80.0%
#7	The Crown of Kings	80.7%
#6	Portal of Evil	81.0%
#5	House of Hell	81.2%
#4	Spectral Stalkers	83.3%
#3	Howl of the Werewolf	85.8%
#2	Black Vein Prophecy	89.0%
#1	**Creature of Havoc**	**90.7%**

GAMEPLAY

#70	Sky Lord	38.0%
#10	The Seven Serpents	78.1%
#9	Legend of the Shadow Warriors	78.2%
#8	Creature of Havoc	78.7%
#7	Vault of the Vampire	79.0%
#6	Moonrunner	80.0%
#5	Stormslayer	80.9%
#4	The Crown of Kings	81.3%
#3	Howl of the Werewolf	82.5%
#2	The Shamutanti Hills	84.1%
#1	**Kharé – Cityport of Traps**	**84.7%**

ATMOSPHERE

#70	Sky Lord	44.7%
#10	Dead of Night	82.2%
#9	Beneath Nightmare Castle	83.8%
#8	Moonrunner	84.0%
#7	Legend of the Shadow Warriors	84.5%
#6	Creature of Havoc	84.7%
#5	Black Vein Prophecy	85.0%
#4	Deathtrap Dungeon	85.9%
#3	The Crown of Kings	86.0%
#2	Howl of the Werewolf	88.3%
#1	**House of Hell**	**92.9%**

ILLUSTRATIONS

#70	Starship Traveller	37.6%
	Revenge of the Vampire	80.0%
#9=	City of Thieves	80.0%
	Deathtrap Dungeon	80.6%
#7=	The Shamutanti Hills	80.6%
#6	Legend of the Shadow Warriors	80.9%
#5	The Crown of Kings	81.3%
#4	Howl of the Werewolf	81.7%
#3	Legend of Zagor	81.8%
	Vault of the Vampire	**82.0%**
#1=	**Kharé – Cityport of Traps**	**82.0%**

Almost at the top ten now, but before we count down the top ten overall books (starting over on the next page), the column to the left gives us the top ten for each of the four values voted upon for each of the seventy regular gamebooks in the series (along with the bottom placing 70th title for comparison).

Black Vein Prophecy, with its unique introduction consisting of nothing at all and eventual revelation of a detailed backstory, and *Slaves of the Abyss*, with its twisted story and race against time, propel two Paul Mason & Steve Williams titles into the top ten for 'Plot'. Peter Darvill-Evans does just as well with *Portal of Evil* and *Spectral Stalkers* scoring quite highly here too. Who am I? What am I? Where am I? Why am I? However, it is Steve Jackson's last title, *Creature of Havoc*, that takes the best plot crown.

The many choices of direction allowable in the recent *Stormslayer* from Jonathan Green enable it to leap up the 'Gameplay' chart to fifth, with *The Seven Serpents* sneaking in at 10th to place all four *Sorcery!* titles together in one top ten. The second volume of that series takes top honours for gameplay, narrowly edging out its predecessor.

Darvill-Evans does well again, this time with his other title *Beneath Nightmare Castle* as it reaches 9th in the 'Atmosphere' chart. But it is Steve Jackson's *House of Hell* that comfortably sits in pole position with regard to atmosphere, the creeping horror of that adventure an outstanding feature for readers it seems.

The 'Illustrations' table is notable for three ties, including 1st place where *Kharé - Cityport of Traps* and *Vault of the Vampire* share being first in reader's affections. Artist Martin McKenna does very well, with half of the titles featured here illustrated by him. It will be interesting to compare this to the votes for favourite artist next issue...

Meanwhile, one interesting point to ponder is how well would *Sorcery!* have done if considered as one story and not four separate books? With the four values, the Plot of *Sorcery!* would score 75.6% or 10th place, Gameplay would give it 82.1% or 2nd place, Atmosphere is at 79.7% putting it out of the top ten at 11th, and Illustrations would score it at 80.1% and 6th place. Overall, *Sorcery!* would score 79.3%, high enough to place it 8th.

And how about the other running series? Keith Martin's two Vampire tales average out at 75.2% or 16th place, the Zagor trilogy manages a score of 68.0% or 36th, and the Deathtrap Dungeon trilogy earns 73.5% or 20th place; taking the same position that *Trial of Champions* achieved – one could argue that makes that particular book the most representative of that trilogy!

And now, without any further waffle on my part, a series of essays counting down the top ten *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks as voted by YOU the reader...

10

THE

A revolution began in 1983. A "thrilling, fun-packed adventure gamebook series for adults", according to the full-page advert on the back cover of *Warlock* #1. A four-part, 2265-paragraph *Sorcery!* series (1983–85) that combined to create an ongoing epic where the reader could keep the same character from beginning to end. So what was so exciting about the first entry in the series?

To place its release in context, *The Shamutanti Hills* is one of the earliest role-playing gamebooks. Its plot is simple and straightforward—a journey from point A (Cantopani Gate) to point B (the city of Kharé) across the lawless Shamutanti Hills. The book does not employ any of the devious trickery found in Jackson's later works (hidden passwords or codes that require translating), and yet the book actually benefits from this naïveté. Although simple, the adventure is not simplistic. The routes across the Shamutanti Hills meander, split, and join, leading to different, often memorable encounters such as infiltrating the Schanker Mines, or meeting the fearsome Skunkbear.

PLOT
71.8%
GAMEPLAY
84.1%
ATMOSPHERE
78.2%
ILLUSTRATIONS
80.6%

OVERALL
78.7%

Jackson was clearly given a freer rein in the writing than for the standard 'for kids' *Fighting Fantasy* adventures. The background section barely refers to the reader's character at all, a technique Jackson developed further in *Creature of Havoc*. The opening paragraph primes the reader for what they will likely face as they begin their exploration of the weird world of Kakhabad. Not a word is wasted; there is nothing written that doesn't need to be there. This brevity and efficiency of the language allows the reader to mentally fill in the gaps. Indeed, without playing through the book several times in quick succession, *The Shamutanti Hills* seems longer and more intricate than it really is. The terseness in style also contrasts well with the intricate illustrations, creating an intriguing dichotomy between words and pictures.

The writing itself is adequate throughout, though unlikely to win any awards. Fortunately, Jackson rarely overdoes a situation before quickly moving on to another, meaning that no encounter outstays its welcome. This fast-paced style and delivery is compelling and the adventure moves along at an enjoyably fast pace. As with Jackson's other works, the book is shot through with flashes of wicked humour; where else could an adventurer have his pocket picked by grass, or a Wizard use his hard earned skills to dig a cess pit?

As far as progressing the gamebook idiom, *Sorcery!* provided two major new innovations. As the first of a four-book series, *The Shamutanti Hills* can be played solo, or as the first part of a four-book adventure. The idea of keeping and reusing a character had always been part of the fledgling RPG hobby for years, but it hadn't been tried before in a gamebook. Gamebook writers would subsequently develop this idea further in other series, but the genesis of the idea can be traced back to this book. This Bridging of the gap between 'kids' gamebooks' and 'adult RPGs' definitely contributed to the longevity of the gamebook idiom in general. Older readers felt they could justify reading ongoing gamebook sagas by classing them as RPGs; the spellbook/spell memorization aspect certainly makes the Sorcery! series more difficult and appealing to a more mature RPG-savvy audience who are used to tables, charts, and extended optional rules. The book even contains a 'random encounter roll' in paragraph 123. Standalone non-campaign gamebooks, however, attracted much ire from hard-nosed gamers, as a look through the letters pages of mid-1980s *White Dwarf* magazines shows. While other (chiefly American) gamebook series contained cutesy talking animals and asinine plots, *The Shamutanti Hills* trailblazed as an RPG-in-gamebook-clothing, attracting critical acclaim and ensuring its own longevity in the process.

The second major innovation introduced in *The Shamutanti Hills* didn't catch on as much as it might have, despite being extremely well-designed—that a player could choose his own character class of Wizard or Warrior. A player wanting a quick setup can just play a Warrior using the normal *Fighting Fantasy* rules. Playing a Wizard is not so straightforward. Spells, symbolised by three-letter mnemonics, must

SHAMUTANTI HILLS

be remembered, since once the game starts, a player may not refer to the Spellbook. Some spells also require a component to cast, such as a Goblin's Tooth or a Sun Jewel. Opting to cast a spell when lacking the appropriate component is usually a painful experience for a Wizard, and one that he must learn from fast if he wishes to cross the hills safely! This design effectively provides two games in one: standard hack-and-slash fare, or a more considered approach based on memory. It also means that there are multiple ways to successfully overcome most of the obstacles the book throws at the player.

> **More time is spent on developing the world and its idiosyncratic characters than on endless fights with tough opponents, making the book a tasty morsel that hooks readers in to follow the odyssey through the subsequent three volumes!**

Despite this, the gameplay remains very fair throughout with few instant-death paragraphs. Jackson clearly constructed *The Shamutanti Hills* as an introduction to the series, and it should be possible for any player, no matter how inexperienced in gamebook lore, to explore and travel a long way across the hills. More time is spent on developing the world and its idiosyncratic characters than on endless fights with tough opponents, making the book a tasty morsel that hooks readers in to follow the odyssey through the subsequent three volumes! The addition of a useful patron goddess, Libra, who can be called on once per adventure also helps smooth over difficulties due to low scores, since she can restore all your scores to their Initial values at any time. This expands the possibilities in playing the book, since low rolls for SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK should not prevent a player from completing the book without resorting to underhanded methods (such as memorising where the best 'rolls' are for the dice images printed at the bottom of each of the pages!). Of course, Libra may be needed to effect a specific rescue from one of several otherwise certain death scenarios, so she should only be called upon when absolutely required.

It is well known that Jackson was inspired by a trekking holiday in Nepal, and that many of the names utilised for the locations throughout the Sorcery! series were borrowed from locations on his own real life adventure, lending an air of believable credibility to the proceedings. It is not difficult to buy in to the setting right from the off, nor is a major suspension of disbelief required for the reader to accept the 'world' and characters of Kakhabad. Another technique employed by Jackson to help the reader accept the Shamutanti Hills as a real, fully-functioning land of magic and mystery is to introduce characters or situations in a matter-of-fact way, as if assuming that the reader, as an 'Analander', will already be aware of them. The role of the Sightmasters, for example, is not clearly explained, though their name and the shamanic illustration of the Sightmaster Sergeant opposite Paragraph 1 give clues as to their strange powers. These combine to lend the book an immersive quality, which is a prerequisite for a good adventure gamebook.

If Jackson's use of Nepalese names provides a consistency in which to tell the adventures, John Blanche's otherworldly illustrations certainly add to the strange air of the book. The detailed, skewed, dreamlike illustrations are a sinister take on the artwork that typically accompanies children's fairy stories, a blending of well known clichés with more than just a hint of darkness. The damsel in distress scenario is turned on its head by the unthankful Alianna, for example.

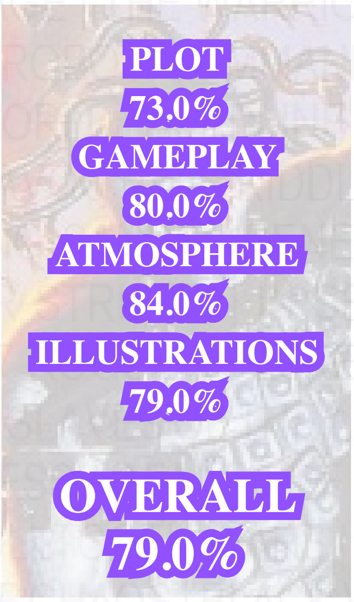
While *The Shamutanti Hills* does not contain Blanche's best work for the *Sorcery!* series, several of the full-page illustrations are very memorable, such as the ugly Troll sentry amid the twisted trees of a small wood (paragraph 99), and Jann the Minimite overlooking the village of Birritanti (paragraph 220). The wonderfully twisted way that nature—the trees and hills—is portrayed aligns deliciously with the grizzled, grotesque features of the peoples that infest the Shamutanti Hills. The land of Kakhabad is depicted as a truly fearsome place!

Since there is no 'one true way' to complete the book, the reader is free to explore the hills and meet their gleefully twisted denizens. These include the sly sorceress Alianna, victim of Elvin mischief; the hunchbacked, worldly wise bridge-keeper Vancass; the repellently ugly Ogre of the Schanker Mines; even a tribe of primitive Head Hunters. Other encounters with non-humanoids are equally memorable, such as the cheeky Pilfer Grass and the fearsome Manticore.

As the first entry in an ongoing saga, *The Shamutanti Hills* managed to hit the ground running. Right from the off, it is clear that Kakhabad is not "Generic Fantasy Land™" with Orcs and Elves; rather, it is a twisted, almost fairy-tale land of dreamlike horrors, backed up by John Blanche's wonderful artwork. The pitch is just right, with encounters that are challenging without being too frustrating. And with multiple routes leading to a successful completion, it has immense replayability. As such, *The Shamutanti Hills* ticks all the boxes for a good, exciting, and above all enjoyable gamebook adventure.

SIMON OSBORNE

Moonrunner sets itself above other gamebooks in almost every respect – its dark setting pulls you in and immerses you in a bizarre and dangerous world where intrigue and adventure stalk every corner. It presents a gruelling yet fair challenge as you try to navigate the perils of the book and discern the route you should take to victory. And its main villain, Karam Gruul, is the most ingenious, diabolical and devious villain you will ever have the misfortune to cross. And you will love it.



PLOT
73.0%
GAMEPLAY
80.0%
ATMOSPHERE
84.0%
ILLUSTRATIONS
79.0%

OVERALL
79.0%

The task seems simple enough – catch the arch fiend, Karam Gruul. Hunting down an evil sorcerer seems like standard *Fighting Fantasy* fare, but it quickly becomes apparent that there is much more to this book when your employer ends up dead in front of you, a knife sticking out of his back.

The book has lots of different paths that you could take and some of these paths are mutually exclusive. This means that you will never cover everything in one read and that you can reach the victorious ending in a variety of ways, all of them full of gripping and challenging encounters. Victory will not come easily but when you do beat the book, its entertainment value does not end there. You can start all over again and take a completely different route. The non linearity of the book is enhanced by the option of choosing skills at the beginning of the book. The paths turn out differently depending on the skills you have chosen, so none of them are good or bad, but turn out differently depending on your skill choices. This adds another challenge to the book and makes it even more replayable.

The items you collect also give you interesting choices. Unlike other gamebooks where you pick up a ton of random widgets that sit passively in your backpack and may or may not come in handy later, the items you pick up in *Moonrunner* provide yet more gruelling decisions – you can get the Skull of Mora Tao and you will be protected from Gruul's most powerful magic, but if you try anything nefarious you will have to feed it with your spirit or it will get you into a lot of trouble. You could also get a shroud that protects you but you could use it to restore your stamina to its initial level instead. Which one will you do?

The city of Blackhaven and its surroundings would not be considered a typical Fantasy setting. The high fantasy and dungeons are replaced with a dark oppressive atmosphere, rife with danger and paranoia. The book takes a lot of scenarios from horror films and the danger and uncertainty of each encounter will get your blood pumping and brain racing. After a few attempts at the book, it becomes apparent that every decision you make might just lead you to yet another death trap or another ghastly scenario. The artwork really helps contribute to the atmosphere of the book. Much of the art contains bodies, usually of your allies, or depicts grim opponents reaching for you with their ghastly clawed hands. The Shocker in particular stands out. It has ghastly clawed fingers in place of teeth, but the bulk of the picture is taken up by its single staring eye. Martin McKenna also goes for a less-is-more approach in his illustration of Mawn Pretoragus. The picture portrays a face and two hands emerging from the blackness of the necromancer's house, leaving you to wonder what horrors are lurking there.

Beyond all this, it is the characters that are the backbone of *Moonrunner*. You will not face any nameless mooks in this book. Even the minor characters have personality. Your allies do more than just hand over random items or give a bit of exposition. Some of your friends in this book stand out by the fact that when you find them, they are dead. If nothing else, this tells you that Karam Gruul, the Hand of Death, is more than just some wizard who sits in the middle of a dungeon, waiting for you to slay him. Professor Van Heldenghast is the last person you'd expect to face down Gruul, yet she is your most valuable ally and if you are rash enough to attack her, you realise just how formidable she is. Other people you meet are a lot less friendly. The tall, silent Kilmarny and the podgy smooth talking Hogg are devilish and one of the sneakiest double acts you will ever come across. And they are also your allies.

None of your enemies provide a bland die rolling

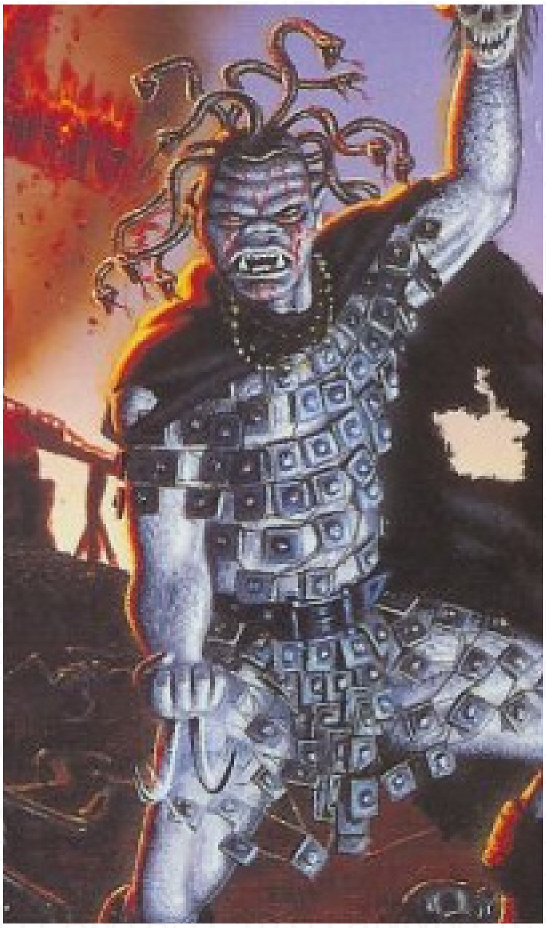
MOONRUNNER

combat. Many of them are sneaky and will try many tricks to bring about your demise. Gruul himself litters Blackhaven with death traps and gloating messages about how superior he is. His servants are many and varied. An old lady turns out to be a Xen Viper assassin. Waiting around too long means you get attacked by acrobatic sorcerers and if you fall for a particular trap, you will have to face an unkillable metal manhunter.

> However, it is Gruul himself who steals the story. The book, takes a while to focus on Gruul himself, yet his machinations pervade everything that comes before the big reveal. He's proactive and his minions are always one step ahead of you.

You could also end up being pursued by Conrad the maniac guard, a masked machete wielding undead monster with the sole purpose of sending you to the grave. Despite his silent demeanour, he makes some brilliant entrances. There is also the Corpse Master who is a bizarre phantom with a bizarre habit of speaking and Doktor Kauderwelsch, a Frankenstein who would go to any lengths for his mother.

However, it is Gruul himself who steals the story. In this review, as in the book, it takes a while to focus on Gruul himself, yet his machinations pervade everything that comes before the big reveal. Why is Gruul such a brilliant villain? He's proactive. He and his minions are always one step ahead of you and hot on your heels in order to bring about your ghastly demise. Even before the end of paragraph 1, he has simultaneously killed your main contact and set you up to look like the murderer.



Gruul also uses every trick possible to make sure you don't get near him. Each answer only produces more questions. Each level of his defences you penetrate only reveals a more dangerous level. You should be wary if you think that you have found Gruul himself as well, for with Gruul, nothing is as it seems. The final confrontation in many gamebooks just involve a prolonged combat with your nemesis but Moonrunner is different. The book builds up to a climax of mythic proportions when you have to face hundreds of opponents and a superweapon designed to kill thousands. This is brilliant as the only thing more breathtaking than the foes you face is the way in which you manage to face all the odds and the plot twists and overcome them by the skin of your teeth to finally bring Gruul to your mercy.

However, it all doesn't end there. Even though Gruul is tied up, he still manages to pull one last trick in order to foil you.

It is at this point that you find out why capturing Gruul was so personal to you and what a moonrunner actually is.

No other *Fighting Fantasy* villain has such depth or deviousness as Karam Gruul. You feel that he is watching you every step of the way and that you are way out of your depth in trying to even get close to him. Some villains only appear as a tough creature at the end of the book. Even if you are in their dungeon, it doesn't feel as if they own it. In *Moonrunner*, it quickly becomes apparent that Gruul owns everything.

The victory paragraph in *Moonrunner* is low key and human. Too many gamebooks offer shallow rewards such as treasure and glory. In most gamebooks, the hero has little background. *Moonrunner*'s hero has personal motivations and a troubled past. In the end you are rewarded by being able to let go of your torment and once your personal mission is over, the lures of gold, fame and responsibility offer no attraction any more.

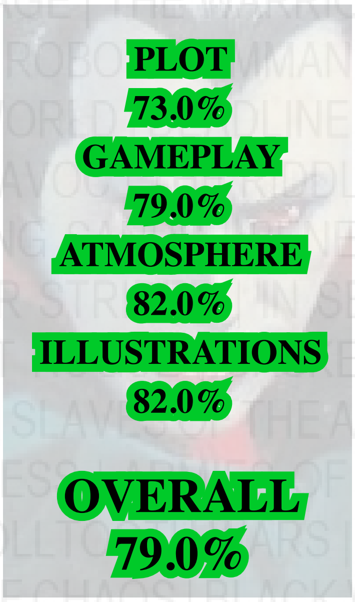
Moonrunner is a great book with a deep, engaging storyline, larger than life characters and compelling plot. Every paragraph is full of paranoia, danger and exhilarating escapes. Completing this book is an achievement. This book well deserves its place as one of the top ten *Fighting Fantasy* books.

STUART LLOYD

B = VAULT

Some *Fighting Fantasy* books hook the reader with a unique premise or setting, like *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* or *Robot Commando*. Some etch themselves into one's memory with a delicious insidiousness by using memorable writing and encounters like *The Keep of the Lich-Lord*, *Howl of the Werewolf* and *Rebel Planet*. Others aren't gifted in quite the same way. On the surface they might seem like another generic Ian Livingstone dungeon crawl, with a flimsy pretence of a story and a long and dull slog to victory. Some manage to rise above a weak start, and turn into a surprisingly unique playing experience.

Such is the case with Keith Martin's *Vault of the Vampire*. At first glance, there isn't a lot to recommend about it. The villain's yet another evil vampire Count, Reiner Heydrich by name, who might as well be Dracula. He only comes down from his creepy old castle to carry off local maidens to feed on their succulent young blood. One of whom was just recently carried off and could really use some rescuing from a brave, macho warrior. Stop me if you've heard this one...



PLOT
73.0%
GAMEPLAY
79.0%
ATMOSPHERE
82.0%
ILLUSTRATIONS
82.0%

OVERALL
79.0%

But once our hero's taken up the job of bringing the girl home and made it to the castle, things don't seem quite so simple or dull. Reiner's not alone in the castle aside from his monstrous guardians. Some of the other members of his family play some surprising and memorable roles. He might be the head of the household now, but Reiner apparently has few fans, especially among his relatives. The ghost of big brother Siegfried, who was in charge before Reiner... settled their differences, shows up like Obi-Wan to help a warrior brave enough to stop Reiner get their hands on the necessary tools. If you catch cousin Wilhelm on a good day he could give our hero a great deal of help. On the other hand, he might try to kill you if it's not. There's also Reiner's sister Katarina who, while just as evil, has interests that don't necessarily parallel the Count's own. Unlike in, for instance, *The Citadel of Chaos*, where lesser characters are implied to be relations of the main evildoer, here the links are established with no ambiguity. So rather than just being another denizen in a place of evil, they have a stronger identity. In your first attempt you'll be wondering how many of the Count's less desirable traits they might share when you find yourself in a room with a person who welcomes you rather than immediately lunging for your neck.

But to assume everyone in the castle is a threat is to do a lot of damage to your chances of tracking Reiner to his lair before he can claim another victim. Who, in fact, turns out not to be totally helpless after all. With no disrespect to the rest of *Fighting Fantasy*, this is a definite step up when most characters don't get to evolve beyond the wise old wizard, the sleazy pirate, the superstitious barbarian...

We all no doubt have some favourite characters scattered throughout the series, but what did we really learn about Yaztromo before venturing into the Forest of Doom? What was the name of the wizard who helped us find the *Portal of Evil*? How much were we told about Abdul the Butcher before we accepted his challenge of piracy that took us across the *Seas of Blood*? What's the beautiful Elindora like when she's not helping adventurers on their quest to breach *The Keep of the Lich-Lord*?

Of course, there's more to reaching Reiner's inner sanctum before the helpless girl becomes just another snack than meeting a fairly colourful cast of characters. Like any tyrant in a swords-and-sorcery realm worth his salt (or in Reiner's case, his Type-O), the vampire lord has filled his castle with a variety of monstrous and magical guardians.

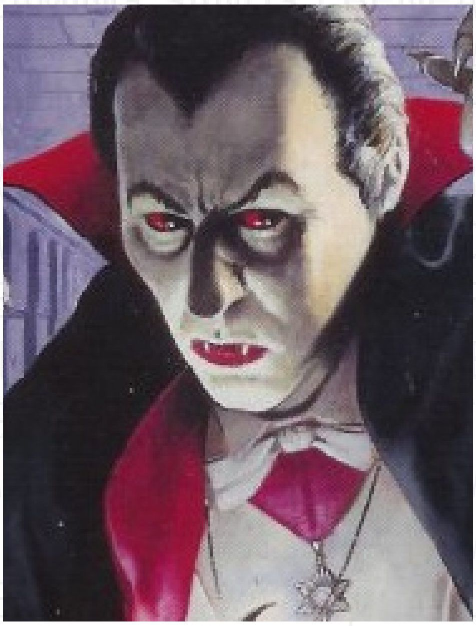
The journey to the Count's castle of horror is fraught with danger but brief, which is for the best as it allows more space to be devoted to the explorations of the castle itself. One of the first dangers encountered within leaps out once the hero reaches the dining hall. Specifically, the tigerskin rug on the floor comes to life to take a bite out of the Count's uninvited guest. Even in a world populated by all kinds of eye-popping monsters, that managed to my attention and hold on tight. Not only did it suggest literally anything could be a danger, but it shows the

OF THE VAMPIRE

Count had a flair for the exotic when selecting his castle's defences.

There are other strange sentinels mixed in with other, more standard creatures that go bump in the night like Zombies, Wraiths and Giant Rats. There's the mad scientist working for the Count who, as many of his ilk have, did something he oughtn't and was changed into some kind of hellish, gelatinous... thing. Then, there are the Thassaloss, the giant, multi-armed bone behemoths the Count employs to guard the most important bits of the castle. The one guarding the vault itself is naturally more powerful, though it can be taken out in one hit with the right magic spell. Although if you didn't happen to get the right roll when determining your spells, Cheelah be with you.

> **With no disrespect to the rest of Fighting Fantasy, this is a definite step up when most characters don't get to evolve beyond the wise old wizard, the sleazy pirate, the superstitious barbarian...**



Slightly less unique but still memorable is the Stench Ghoul, whose power is, you guessed it, to smell so horrendous you're at a -2 penalty during your battle to the death with it. It's always a treat to read a *Fighting Fantasy* adventure with an unusual menagerie of monsters, but it adds so much more to the experience when features are added to a monster that actually figure into fighting it. It makes them that much more memorable and the experience of reading the book that much more vivid.

Certainly the illustrations by Martin McKenna, easily one of the finest artists to put pencil to paper in the name of *Fighting Fantasy*, go a long way toward making these and other dangers stick in a reader's memory. The excellent detail of the illustrations, combined with a slightly better of sense of judgment than usual about what deserved to be illustrated, helped the dangers of the dark forest and castle come to life with greater clarity. They go a long, long way toward taking the experience beyond just reading a book, and into exploring a dungeon wondering not if you'll run into another hideous monster, but when.

Of course, like any good *Fighting Fantasy* adventure the quest for the prime evildoer is about more than just surviving long enough to meet him. It's also about tracking down things to make that final meeting a little easier, and *Vault of the Vampire* had a decidedly unique way of acquiring its ultimate weapon. While I'm sure none of us will doubt *Fighting Fantasy* consists of some of the greatest interactive fantasy literature ever penned, it's always a pleasant surprise when an author thinks up something new to throw at their loyal adventurers.

Siegfried wasn't just a better ruler than his brother, you see, he was also a formidable warrior with formidable equipment. His armour and shield are found by defeating a tough guardian monster, which is exactly what you'd expect. However, to get his enchanted sword, Nightstar, requires finagling some help from one of Reiner's employees. One more interested in having gold to continue his studies than making sure he doesn't draw the ire of an evil vampire, apparently.

Once access is enabled, a quick search of the library turns up a magic book which so happens to be where Reiner sealed away his brother's magic sword. The best weapon in the adventure is in a book. Not in a treasure chest at the bottom of a dungeon, not guarded by some disgustingly powerful monster. It's in a magic book. It was an interesting twist to actually be carrying around the ultimate weapon for most of the book, trying to find some way to get it out before the time comes for the battle with the Count. There's a certain poetry to reading a *Fighting Fantasy* book, and carrying around a book within that book that will offer your best odds against Reiner if only you can find out how to unleash its magic.

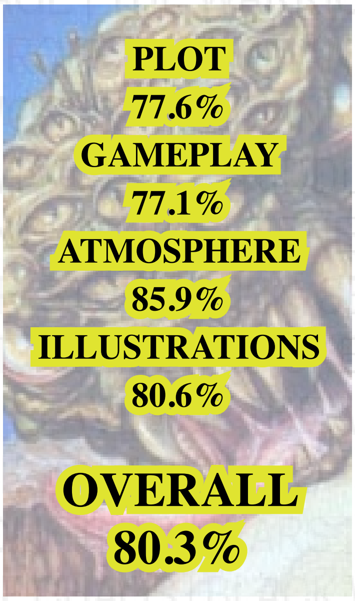
There's no one thing that makes *Vault of the Vampire* stand out. Instead it takes what could've been a very generic and forgettable adventure, and manages to rise above it by forming a concoction of colourful characters, memorable encounters and other unique ideas to create a truly memorable interactive novel. It's only too bad lightning couldn't strike twice for these characters.

DAVID ANDERSON

7

Few could argue against the following statement: that *Deathtrap Dungeon* has one of the most evocative titles of the *Fighting Fantasy* series. Is it the word 'Dungeon' that brings to mind *Dungeons & Dragons*, the progenitor of role-play gaming and one of the principal sources that inspired this gamebook series? Or is it the term 'Deathtrap', which to the teenage mind the book was written for instils images of fiendishly devised booby-traps that when sprung kill or maim in all manner of unpleasant ways? Of course it could just be one helluva catchy title and like a superhero in a Stan Lee comic book it has matching characters if initialised – DD. Whatever hooked the reader into picking up the original edition with Ian McCaig's repulsive Bloodbeast gracing the cover, Ian Livingstone's third solo *Fighting Fantasy* title is a memorable entry in the pantheon of *Fighting Fantasy* titles.

Deathtrap Dungeon exemplifies the ethos of the fantasy genre more so than Livingstone's titles that immediately preceded and followed it. *City of Thieves* and *Island of the Lizard King* are exciting adventures, but both those gamebooks lack that immediate fantasy association that oozes from the very title, *Deathtap Dungeon*. It's a product fresh from Fantasy Quest Class 101; heroic adventurer seeking treasure through a trap filled dungeon full of terrifying monsters. Although the title alone ensures *Deathtrap Dungeon* achieves gamebook immortality, it would be a great disservice to every other entry in the series if this article ended now. *Deathtrap Dungeon*'s legendary status lies beyond its unforgettable title. In order to analyse this gamebook's enduring popularity, this article will need to delve deeper than merely the title and explore specific aspects of the book such as the plot; certain denizens of the dungeon and some NPCs encountered therein and of course the traps all of which serve to ensure *Deathtrap Dungeon*'s reputation as one of *Fighting Fantasy*'s greatest adventures.



PLOT
77.6%
GAMEPLAY
77.1%
ATMOSPHERE
85.9%
ILLUSTRATIONS
80.6%

OVERALL
80.3%

Having vividly established the scenario in the Background, which reveals that YOU are to take part in Baron Sukumvit's Trial of Champions aka 'The Walk', *Deathtrap Dungeon* embodies the simplicity of the gamebook series that perhaps ensured their popularity for over a decade. YOU choose which path to follow within the labyrinthine dungeon and YOU decide whether to open the door or locked chest, and ultimately it's YOU who elects whether to attack first and ask questions later on encountering an inhabitant of the dungeon. YOU are the hero and the adventure that unfolds as the dice are rolled is a reflection of the personality of the reader making the choices.

As with other titles before it *Deathtrap Dungeon* requires the collection of certain items, in this adventure gems and precious stones, in order to successfully complete Sukumvit's twisted competition. To be perfectly blunt the search for these items along with following the 'one true way' makes the adventure frustratingly difficult and how many times have YOU failed to claim the 10, 000 gold pieces prize that awaits the victor? Yet it's the fact that the challenge is hard that always brings you back to 'The Walk'. If you failed to find the diamond or answer the white-haired old man's riddle, then YOU will return to the dungeon, because it's not about the money, but about the being the first person to complete the Trial of Champions.

YOU decide which direction you will follow once you pass through the ornate gateway that leads into the dungeon, but there's one course of action you cannot avoid and that is forming a temporary alliance with Throm the Barbarian. It's a strange friendship for somehow YOU just know that, given the unalterable fact only one champion can emerge victorious; something is going to happen to kill either YOU or Throm. The Dwarf Trial-master is just doing his job when it is revealed you must take on Throm in hand-to-hand combat to the death, but how sweet is it to run him through with your sword afterwards? The short-lived friendship with the Barbarian is one of the elements of *Deathtrap Dungeon* that lingers in the mind long after the dice have been put away and the gamebook returned to the shelf.

Something else that may linger longer in the mind post-adventure is some of the monstrous inhabitants YOU may encounter within the dungeon. Although the book claims that weak initial rolls for SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK should not prevent YOU from being victorious, *Deathtrap Dungeon* is certainly no walk in a park. YOU might start your journey with ten provisions, but your STAMINA will certainly take a pounding if you run into any of the following oversized critters; Giant Scorpion, Minotaur, Bloodbeast, Manticore and let's not forget the Tyrannosaur-Rex wannabe – the infamous Pit Fiend. With its vicious stats of SKILL 12, STAMINA 15 this beast is a truly formidable opponent and it's not even the final encounter before turning to paragraph 400. This menagerie of large beasts is complemented by the appearance of the Troglodytes and their infamous Run of the Arrow game. A feature that further cements the realism of the fantasy world YOU are exploring by having a species' cultural traits depicted.

> Yet it's the fact that the challenge is hard that always brings you back to 'The Walk'. If you fail then YOU will return to the dungeon, because it's about the being the first person to complete the Trial of Champions.

What of the traps? Besides the relatively mild traps YOU might encounter which include jets of poisonous gas, crossbow bolts and corrosive slime. Within the confines of the dungeon there lurk far more elaborate traps. There are two opportunities to become petrified; one is by failing to answer the aforementioned white-haired man's devious riddle and the other is to foolishly look upon a Medusa. Taking a leaf out of many a classic booby-trap scenario, YOU have the opportunity to spring a trap in which the ceiling will descend and crush YOU in a stone vice. The most disturbing trap goes to the ominously named chamber of the dead in which if YOU find yourself there then you have a met a truly terrifying fate. Perhaps the greatest 'trap' within the dungeon complex is failing to collect the right gems/precious stones and being told, rather matter-of-factly by Igbut the Gnome, that you can never leave the dungeon.

Besides the frustrating complexities of object collection there are some minor quibbles that need to be aired. 'The Walk' takes place on May 1st after a two-week festival at the end of April. Really, I hear you say? Yes it does, open up your copy and read the Background. Of course *Deathtrap Dungeon* was penned some time before the months of Sowing and Winds were conceived, although it's surprising Livingstone didn't create something on the spot as the familiar monthly names of April and May seem strangely out of place in this fantasy setting. Having said that their usage doesn't really impede the adventure and they are forgotten unless you have to analyse the text for an article. A bugbear that doesn't dissipate so easily is the inclusion of the Ninja who is clearly a warrior of this world and not one that fits in with the fantasy world in which the suspension of disbelief requires YOU to be part of on entering the tournament that takes place in Fang. I wonder if Livingstone put him in the story due to a vein of thinking similar to that of the Eleventh Doctor, who would say "Ninjas are cool". Shuriken throwing Ninjas are cool, but they don't belong in Allansia anymore then saying the fourth and fifth months are called April and May.

These little grievances do little to detract from the adventure and Livingstone mentions April again in the sequel *Trial of Champions* and he also replaces the Ninja with a Samurai warrior so at least it can be said he is consistent in allowing the real world to impose itself in a minor capacity within the fantasy world he and Jackson established in *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*. *Trial of Champions* would see a revised dungeon, however its monsters are nothing special and its traps lack the creativity of the original and the collection of gold rings didn't reinvent the dungeon but simply rehash it. The novelty of that gamebook surrounds the fact that you spent the first quarter of the book training to take part in 'The Walk' to fight on behalf of Lord Carnuss, Sukumvit's evil brother.

Deathtrap Dungeon remains a strong favourite among the readership of *Fighting Fantasy* because its complex and intricate precious stone collection solution entices YOU to venture into Sukumvit's labyrinth once again, only this time YOU will emerge triumphant. At the end of the day *Deathtrap Dungeon* is a tour-de-force in adventure gamebook mechanics; choosing the path take, the items to collect and the encounters to battle is all up to YOU. Livingstone has written several classic gamebooks, but *Deathtrap Dungeon* remains his finest hour.

IAN BROCKLEHURST

6

House of Hell was among the first few *Fighting Fantasy* adventures that I read as a wide eyed ten year old and it left a lasting impression – I remember finding the badly creased volume wedged into a shelf and partly hidden in an old, dust filled second hand bookshop, like some long-forgotten copy of the *Necronomicon*.

The most immediately notable feature of the original printing of the book was its striking cover illustration – a dark path leading to a shadowy mansion, flanked by a gauntlet of warped and twisted creatures (regrettably the cover art of the two recent reprints of the book do not to justice to the original cover). Upon flicking through random pages, the vivid illustrations provide for an immediate sampling of the horrors that await the reader within – rotting corpses, masked cultists, fiery demons, deranged prisoners and a couple of skeletons that appear to be dressed like film noir detectives! The quality and style of the illustrations matches the theme of the book perfectly – Tim Sell's work is particularly excellent at portraying the various undead and human inhabitants of the house.

PLOT
81.2%
GAMEPLAY
72.9%
ATMOSPHERE
92.9%
ILLUSTRATIONS
75.9%

OVERALL
80.7%

Steve Jackson was extremely bold to test the limits for a work that was targeted at a children's audience, especially when other role-playing systems such as *Dungeons & Dragons* were becoming the target of increasing attacks by social commentators and religious groups. While this eventuated in several changes to the book in later publications (the word 'hell' was changed to 'hades' for the US publication and later versions removed an illustration of a sacrificial victim) the original printing was no doubt a delight to children who had enthusiastically braved their way through the horrific, trap infested, gore strewn tunnels of Deathtrap Dungeon and the like.

There are many grisly scenes in *House of Hell*, though in this writer's opinion *House of Hell* tops this by providing the most memorable death scene from the entire *Fighting Fantasy* collection – a scene where the reader is trapped in a torture chamber and, having failed an interrogation test, is given the morbid privilege of choosing between starving to death in a small, confined, hanging cage, or one that is very narrow and tall. At this stage of the adventure, there is no possibility of survival and yet Jackson taunts the reader by offering them to select the manner of their own demise, with each option an equally agonizing death.

One aspect of this book that is often criticized is that it contains 'one true path' amidst a labyrinth of corridors, bedchambers and underground chambers. Some readers have noted their frustrations that a single wrong turn would doom the reader to an inevitable grisly death at some point later in the adventure. However, the very evocative and gruesome death scenes are morbidly entertaining in their own right – and given the horror themed environment and the ordinary background of the hero, it seems reasonable that this is an adventure where the chances of survival are remote at best. Fortunately most of the difficulty of this adventure lies with finding the correct route through the house (and an appropriate weapon), rather than having to make impossible dice rolls. Once the reader has mastered the maze like structure of the house, there is only a single relatively difficulty fight which is at the very end of the book.

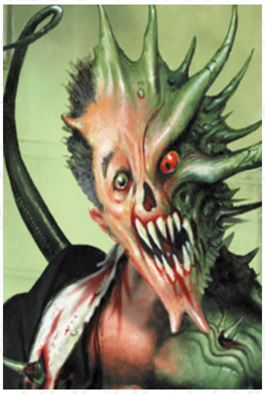
The modern day setting and the initial story provide an opportunity to have a regular person as the protagonist, with no initial weapons, armour or provisions. The reader has an immediate SKILL penalty for fighting unarmed, and for most of the adventure is lucky if they have even a letter opener to defend themselves with. The hero has no established backstory (at least in the original printing as the latest version from Wizard has pre-generated characters with histories), set of legendary exploits, or spells to rely upon. This, combined with the use of a FEAR score (where upon the hero could literally be scared to death), provides a sense of immersion where the reader could readily imagine that they themselves were the central character.

In terms of story, admittedly the introduction is slightly cliché – the main character is driving through

House of Hell

the country at night during an intense storm and appears to hit a stranger that appears from nowhere. The car is badly damaged and the stranger nowhere to be seen, so the hero has no choice but to seek out the nearest sign of inhabitation – a mysterious light in the forest which reveals the presence of the manor. On the other hand, this plunges the reader into the midst of the story immediately with the opportunity to confront the primary villain within several paragraphs.

> At this stage of the adventure, there is no possibility of survival and yet Jackson taunts the reader by offering them to select the manner of their own demise, with each option an equally agonizing death.



It would be easy to have simply jumped past the initial part of the adventure and start with the hero waking from a drugged state to find that they are imprisoned within the house. Instead, the reader is given a variety of choices as to whether they sneak their way into the house or if they greet the occupants directly. The latter choice then allows the reader to meet the chief villain face to face and engage in conversation over a three-course meal. While most of these options invariable lead to the hero being drugged and falling unconscious, the reader has an elusive chance of being able to avoid this fate and instead make their way to one of the various bedchambers in the house where they begin their exploration of the house.

Another welcome element in *House of Hell* is the absence of any initial personal quest. There is no princess to rescue, wizard to slay or McGuffin to locate – instead the character's only goal is to survive and naturally this involves escaping or slaying some of the occupants of the manor. Allies are few and far between, and the reader is immediately suspicious of the few inhabitants encountered that do not attack immediately. Instead of a detailed introduction that is soon forgotten by the reader who is eager to start rolling dice, the plot and villains are gradually revealed through exploration and dialogue with the denizens of the house.

While combat is generally rare, many of the adversaries encountered are often human (or creatures that appear to be human), and it soon becomes apparent that your adversaries have a level of evil that is elevated above that of the usual fantasy staples – Orcs, Goblins and the like. In addition to the merciless torturer, the hero can encounter devil worshippers, talking paintings, a deranged hunchback, a poltergeist, the Earl of Drummer and even a butler that turns out to be something far more sinister.

What makes *House of Hell* such a fantastic read is the sense of suspense that builds up as the reader gradually explores the house and is presented with various options that hint at possible threats. Most rooms seem safe at first glance, but there are generally hints of concealed danger (for example, a mysterious 'bulging curtain' against the far wall of an empty bed chamber). Having glanced at the various illustrations in the book, the reader is generally aware that most chambers in the house involve some kind of horror or devious trap – and as the hero's FEAR score gradually escalates, the reader is forced to decide between investigating every possible room to find useful information or weapons, or to simply avoid danger and press on as fast as possible.

This suspense is heightened by the Lovecraftian feel to the house, from the goat masked cultists to the various names given to each room ('Asmodeus', 'Diabolus' and 'Mephisto' to name a few). While there are some cliché elements to the book, at no point does the mature theme feel contrived or satirical. The various devious puzzles inserted into the adventure give the house the same deadly feel that made *Creature of Havoc* such a popular and infuriating read, with various codewords, riddles and hidden paragraph references scattered throughout the book.

With seventy *Fighting Fantasy* books published to date, many of the high fantasy environments, dungeons and characters blend into one vague adolescent memory. Because of this, *House of Hell* stands out as a work on its own, with many of the encounters and illustrations still fresh in my mind even before rereading the book for this article. The uniqueness of this book, both in terms of its theme and vivid encounters makes *House of Hell* worthy of its recent reprint and I hope that it leaves a similar impression on a new generation of unwitting visitors.

In 2010 it was announced that *House of Hell* would be converted into a horror film, with a promise that the blu-ray edition would contain an 'interactive film' special feature. Although it seems doubtful that after two decades the story could be reproduced as a film and be as evocative as the original book, the hinting of a digital *Fighting Fantasy*/film blend is something that the writer will be following with great interest.

ROBERT DRAKE

5 CREATURE

Thjsi jsibna fssbya pnoc rfbt vrfep fohbvpc. Mvchup fowhbtay pv urfb dawjl libfepfo ljttlfeh flpe tpoyp vubnd a spm fepf othf ejnfp rmbt jpnom byaf vfnelf bd aypvu bstrby. Bsa ypvu wjllifjn diwhf neypv ustb rt ar fbdjn giyp vuhb vfepnl yot hfe fbjntf stebw brfnfssep foyp vrus vrrpv ndjng sibnd aypvr ubct jpnsow jlli bferv lfd ebyejns tjnc tsit hfej nstjn ctsip fot hfecrf btvr feyp vu brf.

This entire essay was going to be written in the language of the *Creature of Havoc*, but saner voices prevailed, and however desirable that initial idea might appear, it would perhaps be needlessly obtuse. *Creature of Havoc* is that sort of book though, that can easily inspire 1400 words written in coded gibberish. Per Jorner even wrote an earlier entertaining review of it in the form of a mini *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook,[1] the majority of which was an erudite dialogue about the book, between a Dwarf and an Orc killing time in some nameless Allansian dungeon.

PLOT
90.7%
GAMEPLAY
78.7%
ATMOSPHERE
84.7%
ILLUSTRATIONS
69.3%

OVERALL
80.8%

For myself, lacking access to *Warlock* magazine and its impending announcements of a 'play-the-monster' gamebook, *Creature of Havoc* first shambled into view on a family trip to Brisbane where I acquired the book, plus *Masks of Mayhem*, and *Titan – the Fighting Fantasy World*, in exchange for a promise to stop fighting my younger brother every time he crossed the 'line of death' that was drawn across the back seat of the car. The book was an instant hit with me, particularly in presentation – with the creepy Ian Miller cover (having already seen his amazing pictures of Gormenghast in Robert Holdstock and Malcom Edwards' *Realms of Fantasy* (1983) coffee-table art book), the colour map by Dave Andrews (the second *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook to have one as they started imitating *Lone Wolf*), and the scratchy debris-filled internal art by Alan Langford (who was an early favourite artist of mine for his work in *Island of the Lizard King* and *Sword of the Samurai*).

Creature of Havoc was in itself a hefty tome by *Fighting Fantasy* standards – 460 paragraphs long! – and the background short story *Tales of Trolltooth Pass* was not only an evocative yarn in its own right but also temptingly extended what bits and pieces we knew about this corner of Allansia from *Out of the Pit* and *Titan*. Flicking through the pages of the book in a quest for cool pictures and interesting monsters, I stumbled upon passages of garbled and seemingly meaningless text. Had there been a printing error, I wondered?

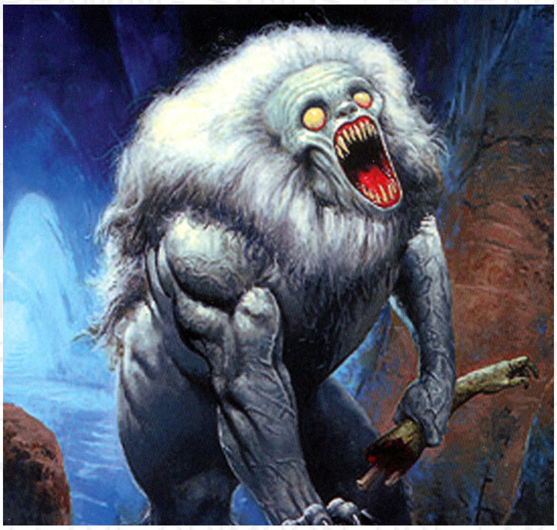
Dutifully, I rolled up Creature Number One, and began to play. Initially, I followed the book's maxim to find out about who or what you are, by noting down almost anything about the creature I was playing – 'scaly', 'retractile claws' 'muscular arms' and so on. However this was quickly abandoned as the true lethality and deviousness of the book was blood-spatteringly revealed, and a succession of Creatures, now numberless, fell off slippery bridges, became incinerated, were turned into pin-cushions by Dark Elves, were devoured by the Chattermatter, tumbled howling down dark pits, and generally suffered fairly short and miserable existences in the dungeons of Zharradan Marr. And, when not dying in painful and humiliating fashion, the Creatures were endlessly taunted by screeds of that blasted coded nonsense… It was obvious there was a bright new world out there above the dungeon, where people spoke normally, instead pfo ljk feth js. However, it was proving impossible to reach.

As a result, two things happened. Firstly, I started mapping the underground dungeon complex. Unlike previous *Fighting Fantasy* titles such as *Temple of Terror* or *Trial of Champions*, whose linear catacombs are essentially one long corridor with occasional branches and special encounters, the dungeon in *Creature of Havoc* was grid-shaped in contrast. It was still somewhat linear as it tended to funnel you either towards the sole possible exit or a host of lethal traps clustered in the immediate vicinity. Still, it proved troublesome enough to map that I abandoned my previous mapping style (inspired by both the mapping article in the first issue of *Warlock* and time spent drawing dungeon floor plans for *Dungeons & Dragons*), and instead flow-charted the entire complex, a method I have used ever since.

OF HAVOC

The second happening was less honourable – I started cheating! It was just too hard, too involved, and I had too little patience. It took ages though to find out how to decipher the code – at first I assumed it was unimportant and didn't even bother. Cleverly, if you looked closely when creatures spoke to you in code you would spot gaps in the punctuation highlighting alternative paragraphs to turn to, and the discovery of this, however dishonestly, was a sublime moment of realization. I cheated my way through the rest of the book, and mapped out a solution. It's probably not something I'm especially proud of, but then *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks to me have always been more "Titan campaign supplement" and less "game" or "book", and thus cheating was legitimized in my mind as discovering all the secrets that lurked within…

The true lethality and deviousness of the book was blood-spatteringly revealed, and a succession of Creatures fell off slippery bridges, became incinerated, were devoured, tumbled down pits, and generally suffered.



Creature of Havoc was not without a few other stylistic issues that could be levelled at it as criticisms. Per Jorner has noted that the second half of the book, once you are free from the dungeon, is too linear and too easy to discern and follow the true path to success. From a personal perspective, I would have liked more 'monster' in the book, as, assuming you're on the path to success, things quickly become complicated and intrigue-heavy. If I'm playing as a monster I want simple pleasures like carnage and destruction, by Slangg! None of this political nonsense!

Also, it's a shame it's never revealed what the *Creature of Havoc* actually is. There's plenty to suggest that your species is well-known for its powers and its love of eating Hobbits. You also have your own language, which we know thanks to the Chattermatter. Based on this evidence, I once postulated[2] that it's likely you represent some prototype of the reptilian Shape Changer crafted by Axion, though this still seems needlessly contrived. Here of course we have a missed opportunity by Wizard Books, for when including sample characters for the error-strewn second reprint, they could have provided several different creature types with backgrounds and rules. Unfortunately, this did not happen...

The final criticism is that it is Steve Jackson's last book, indeed, following this he said he'd never write another.[3] For such an innovative and intriguing author to bow out this early in the series is something of a minor tragedy, leaving us to the not so tender mercies of the ultra-linear instant death-heavy scavenger hunts that characterized the subsequent efforts by his cofounder Ian Livingstone (not to mention the nameless hordes of barely-credited sub-authors).

Despite all this, *Creature of Havoc* is an influential and subversive work. The play-the-monster aspect offers a unique change in viewpoint that has only now been taken up by Jonathan Green in later titles such as *Howl of the Werewolf* and *Night of the Necromancer*. The subversion present in *Creature of Havoc* is never explicitly stated, but the gleeful way in which you, the Creature, get to tear apart classic fairy-tale and fantasy tropes such as the Woodcutter, the Elf, the various adventurers, and, of course, the Hobbits (and how did that name get past the Tolkien estate?), can only extend the subtle in-jokes of *Kharé – Cityport of Traps*, where we saw Sprites and Pixies beat each other up, and heavily intoxicated Black Elves puffing away copiously on smoking weed.

Creature of Havoc is an entertaining and infuriating read in equal measure, and rightly ranks up there as one of the best *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks published. It may be difficult but it is never boring, and like any great work of entertainment, you will likely revisit it again and again to unlock its many secrets. In short, Steve Jackson has penned a classic.

ANDREW WRIGHT

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[1] Jorner, P. (2003, October 18). Reviews Part 4: From Sword of the Sorcerer to Crypt of the Samurai. Message posted to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gamebooks/message/4511.

[2] Wright, A. (2005, August 8). What is the Creature of Havoc (Part One). Message posted to http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/titan_rebuilding/message/228

[3] Boughton, B. (1988). Jackson and Livingstone I presume? *G.M. The Independent Fantasy Roleplaying Magazine*, 1(4), 38-41.

4 LEGEND OF

The first striking thing about *Legend of the Shadow Warriors* is its cover. You could describe it as "so, it's night time, there are some scarecrows in a field, and they have carved pumpkins for heads," but it would not be fair to Terry Oakes's wonderful artwork. Ominous without looking like a cheap death metal album cover, it is probably one of the best ones in the whole series, even though many readers will probably mistake the pumpkin-headed scarecrows for the Shadow Warriors of the title at first sight. It nevertheless sets well the tone of this book: this is not going to be your standard sunny stroll through Allansia, far from that.

In this second adventure penned by Stephen Hand, this time without Jim Bambra, the player is cast as a seasoned Gallantarian sword-for-hire, requested by some peasants to help protect their village from what appears to be mere marauders. However, events soon take a disquieting twist when the said marauders turn out to be the fabled Shadow Warriors, five powerful minions of an ancient demonic being called Voivod who is – of course – on the verge of making his big come-back. Things are not looking well for Titan: could this be the end of the world as we know it?

PLOT
80.0%
GAMEPLAY
78.2%
ATMOSPHERE
84.5%
ILLUSTRATIONS
80.9%

OVERALL
80.9%

The overall mood of the book is especially intriguing, with some apocalyptic overtones rarely seen in other gamebooks: preachers predict the end of times, there are signs of decay and pestilence everywhere you look at, and several characters (including baddies!) allude to the massive changes that Voivod's return is about to cause, giving a sense of urge to your mission which is all too often absent from other *Fighting Fantasy* books. Hand's Old World is a grim place, miles away (not only literally) from the quite childish and much less plausible Allansia.

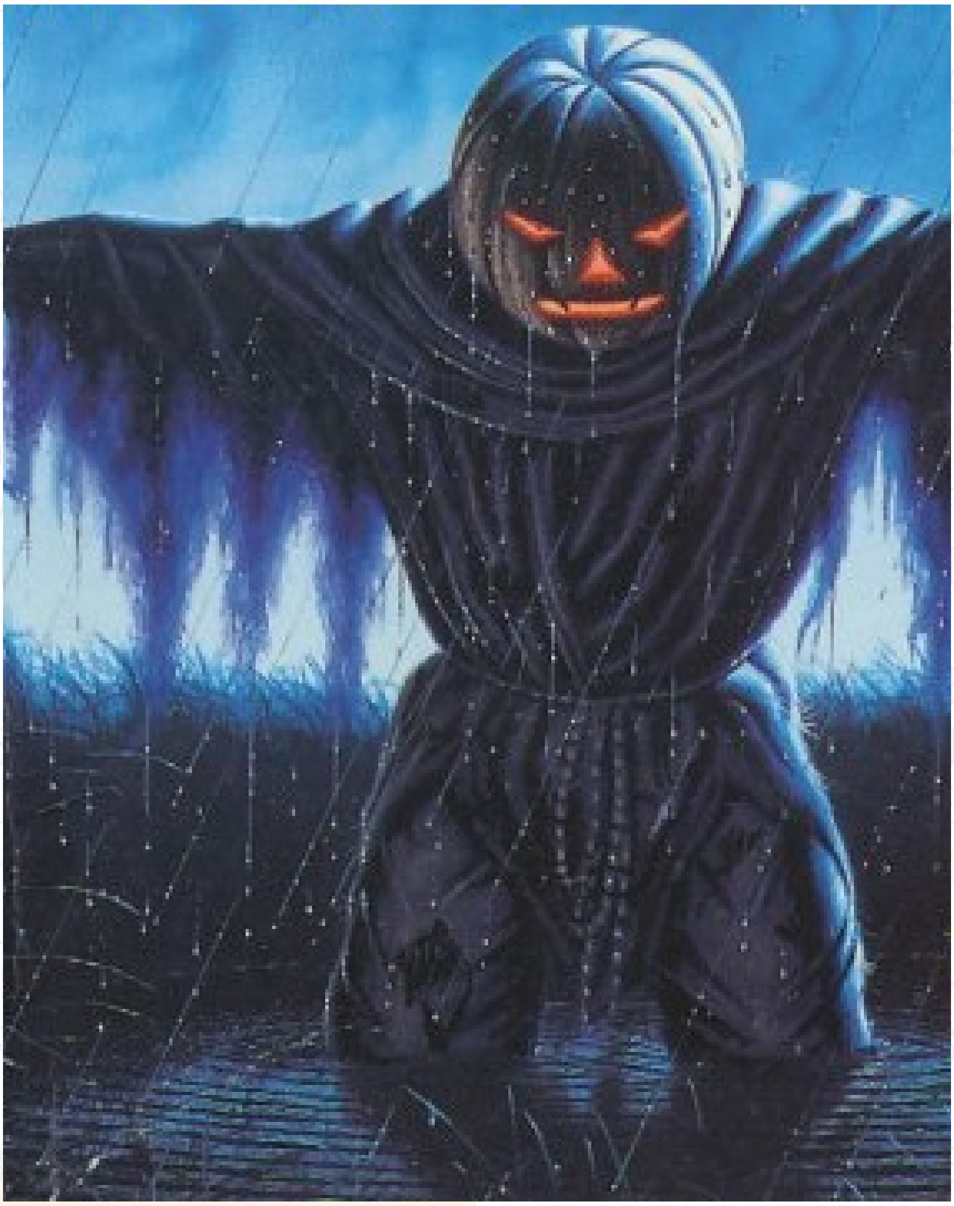
The construction of *Legend of the Shadow Warriors* is quite similar to *Dead of Night*, with many a-secondary quest to spice up your travel from the starting point to the boss battle (a trick later re-used by Jonathan Green), thus ensuring a long and enthralling adventure. Most of these encounters are refreshingly original: you do not see an archaeologist, a tax collector or a circus every day in your usual *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, and yet they never seem out of place in this medieval setting. The rules have nothing special, except for an interesting addition: the pieces of armour you can buy, rather than giving you a simple STAMINA bonus, allow you to reduce damage during fights, for a certain time before being destroyed. It is just one rule, but it adds a bit of realism without being overcomplicated, which is always welcome.

Not everything hangs together quite as well, though: in particular, there is an avoidable, yet really annoying left-right labyrinth with lapidary paragraphs, all going something like: "Descending a long, wide staircase, you come to a crossroads. Will you go North, South, East or West?", and random instant deaths lurking at some points. This tedious piece of adventure occupies a good chunk of the book which could have been used better, especially as elsewhere, some transitions are quite shaky, and a bit more smoothness would not have hurt (see the jump between 315 and 104 for a blatant example of this). Of course, these blunders can be somewhat forgiven from an author who is only writing his second book.

Meanwhile, hosts of Mandrakes and Haggworts make sure the journey to Voivod will not be a stroll in the park (yet what is on Titan when you are, well,

you?). The Mandrake sequence is especially among the most disturbing ever seen in the whole series. The best villains in the book are however the Shadow Warriors themselves, despite their SKILL stats which are high enough to condemn you to a quick death if you have been unlucky when rolling your character. Even though (or maybe because?) they are nothing but a curious mix of Nazgûl (immortal dark-clad riders) and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (each has his own distinctive weapon), everything about them just screams "cool!", and after you have barely escaped your first encounter with the deadly quintet, you will frequently look back over your shoulder and listen for the step of their undead horses.

> Even though (or maybe because?) they are nothing but a curious mix of Nazgûl (immortal dark-clad riders) and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (each has his own distinctive weapon), everything about the Shadow Warriors just screams "cool!"



After them, Voivoid himself is sadly something of a disappointment. With next to no personality and a very short final scene, he has little chance to be inducted in Titan's Evil 'n' Chaos Hall of Fame. However, the underlying moral of the book, which (without spoiling) revolves around him, is quite interesting, and totally new in a series where "moral" usually means nothing more than "attacking good wizards is bad for you" or "there is nothing wrong with trespassing into other people's houses to plunder their stuff (as seen in other *Fighting Fantasy* books). The philosophical aspects drawn by Hand may look somewhat childish (I must admit that the "Voivod is death and, as you cannot kill death, you die!" line of thought made me laugh really hard when I first read it), but this lack of complexity may be forgiven, since *Fighting Fantasy* were aimed at younger readers. And if you are sick of the same merciless killing that takes place over and over in other adventures, then the ending will surely please you.

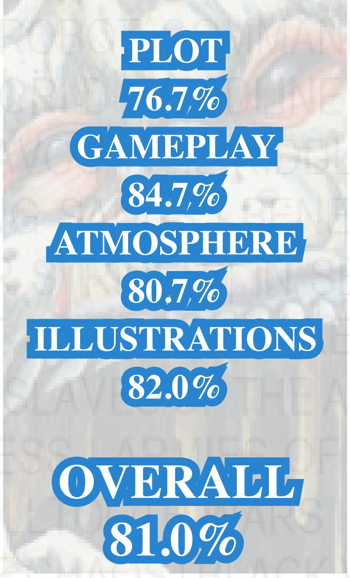
Overall, *Legend of the Shadow Warriors* makes for a good reading, even though the main plot may lack some substance. The diversions are particularly enjoyable and allow the reader to go back to the book a few times and discover new places without hindering his chances of success, nor his reading pleasure. It is certainly one of the strongest *Fighting Fantasy* books, standing with some others (such as Paul Mason's books) as an attempt to go beyond the original simplicity of the series and into more mature and thought-provoking territory.

JULIEN MENELDUR

3

KHARÉ –

When I first read *Kharé – Cityport of Traps* many years ago as an impressionable young lad, there were several reasons why I was initially disappointed. Firstly there was no Big Bad Boss (not counting the Archmage, who doesn't appear for another two books). Secondly, there weren't that many cool CREATURE encounters. No Dragons Lizardmen, Demon Lords, or even Orcs to get your sword into (those pesky Orcling beggars hardly count). Most of them were just kind of geeky in fact (think Flayer, Bristle Beast and, that most feared of *Fighting Fantasy* enemies, a Paintbrush!).



PLOT
76.7%
GAMEPLAY
84.7%
ATMOSPHERE
80.7%
ILLUSTRATIONS
82.0%

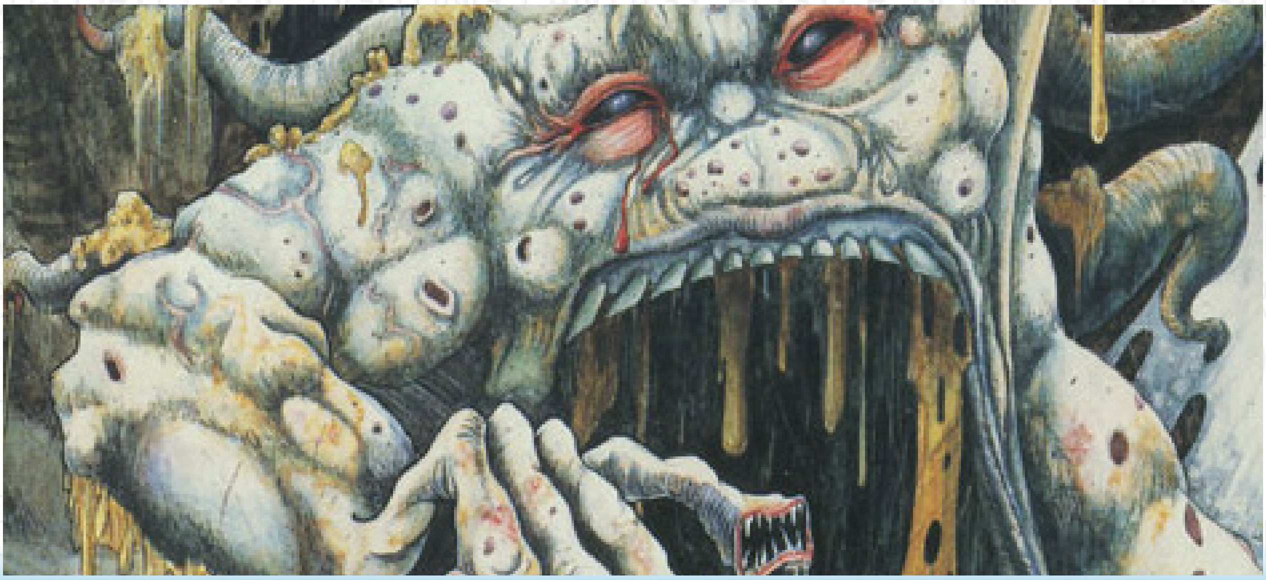
OVERALL
81.0%

Thirdly, there were no proper traps. I'd been hoping for a Mouse Trap of a city, with spring-loaded snares, falling cages, and disappearing floors, not a couple of black shimmering dustbin lids which you have to be pretty stupid to fall foul of. And finally there was the plot... or lack of it.

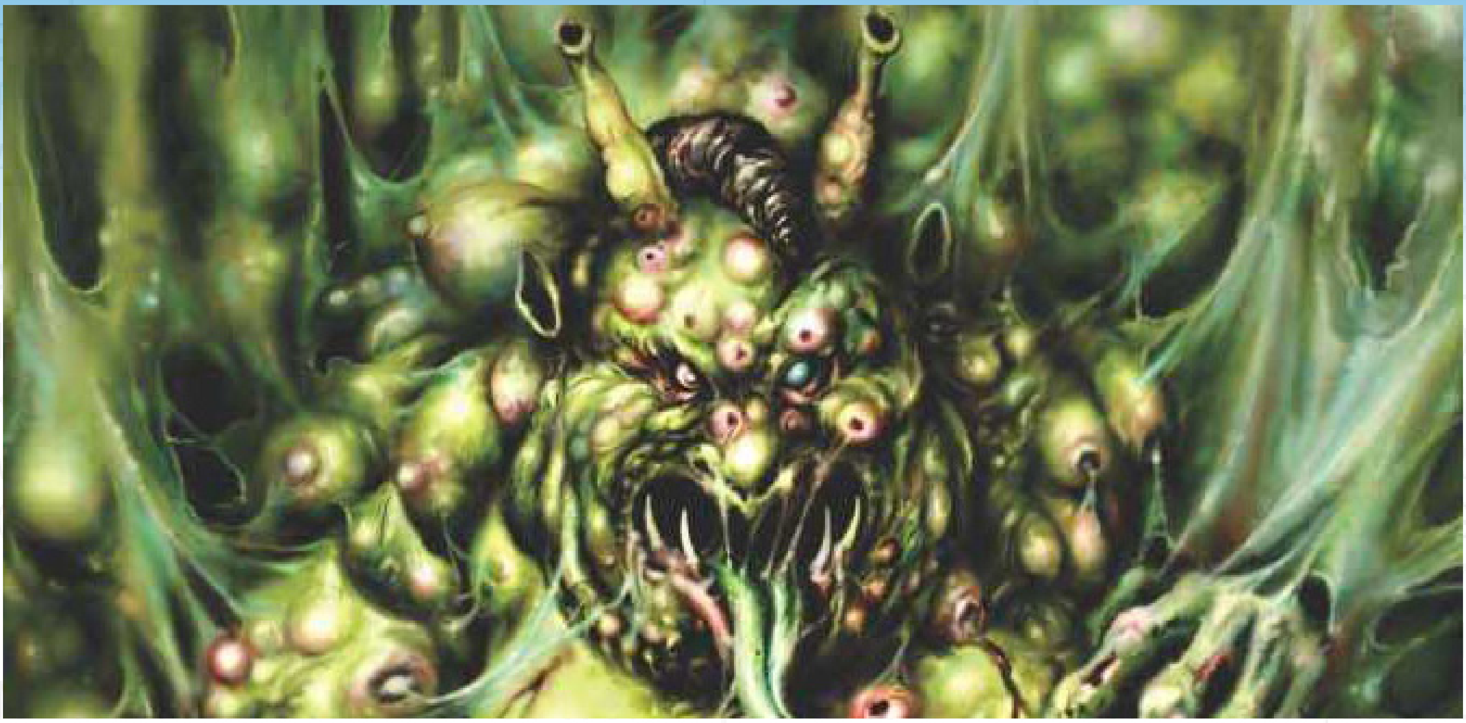
So you're trying to find your way across Kakhabad to the Archmage's fortress and you have to pass through a city via its north gate, which can only be opened by those who know a four-line spell. The only person who knows all of the lines is off on a boating trip, and of those who know parts of the spell, one is dead and another is a doddery old fool who has forgotten the crucial details! Wouldn't it have been a much better idea to have avoided Kharé altogether (or, having realised your predicament once inside the city, left by the south gate or by the river) and to have got some friendly boatman to ferry you across to the Baklands?

But through Kharé you must go, and it's not long before you find yourself immersed in a decaying, murderous, and precariously multicultural skeleton of a city. One minute you might be debating with a robe-wearing scholar, the next smoking narcotics with somnolent Black Elves, and the next having a punch-up with a hairy Barbarian. Slowly, Kharé starts to get under your skin, in a creeping, haunting kind of way, one that leaves you wanting more.

Vanilla fantasy this certainly is not. It's like no other city in *Fighting Fantasy* (or on Earth, although the faded, other-worldly, squalid beauty of the place is reminiscent of parts of the Indian subcontinent). Port Blacksand, star of the show in *City of Thieves* and *Midnight Rogue*, may well be a fascinating place, but it feels much more like an artificial set created for the gamebooks which take place there. Kharé just seems to exist, and it feels like you just happen to have found yourself in it. Round the next corner might be a crucial encounter or some dreary township, adding to the feeling that this city hasn't just



CITYPORT OF TRAPS



Blanche's illustrations are an essential part of this atmospheric mix, from the initial view of Kharé, sitting like a clot of rotting flotsam astride a stinking river, to the drunken shenanigans in The Wayfarer's Rest.

been constructed for the purposes of your adventure.

John Blanche's illustrations, particularly suited for capturing the chaotic cityscape and the dishevelled residents, are an essential part of this atmospheric mix, from the initial view of Kharé, sitting like a clot of rotting flotsam astride a stinking river, to the drunken shenanigans in The Wayfarer's Rest.

Little details in this book add to the experience: the exotic names, an integral part of the *Sorcery!* experience (e.g. Kharé, Lumlé, Sansas, Vlada); the bits of back-story (e.g. the Nobles of Kharé, the Crolian guards, the Shield Maidens of Lumlé); the details in the illustrations (e.g. Lortag's library, the nesting storks, the thatched roofs and daubed walls, the drunken Pixies). It all adds up to a unique cocktail which lifts the setting above the usual fantasy urban mix of corrupt guards, riotous taverns, and rip-off markets.

That's not to say that everything in the book is original. There are corrupt guards, riotous taverns and rip-off markets, just as there should be. And like all great works, it recycles elements from other sources. One of my favourite aspects of the book (and indeed the whole of *Sorcery!*) is the series of references to Jason and the Argonauts – not the classical Greek tale by Apollonius of Rhodes directly, but the wonderful 1963 film featuring Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion genius. So in Kharé you might meet a blind beggar tormented by Harpies, you might fight a Bronze Statue with a hidden weakness, or you might need to call on a goddess who can only help you a limited number of times (the Golden Fleece and the Hydra must await till another book in the series, *The Crown of Kings*).

As for the quest itself, well, finding the correct path can be a little tricky, and there are several puzzles which might leave you stumped on the first few attempts. And although there are a couple of instances where you can back-track to find missing spell lines, more often than not one wrong turn off the correct path means you're not going to be leaving Kharé by the North Gate. But that's all right, because exploring Kharé is such fun, and as a wrong turn rarely means instant death you'll want to try every possible route to see what other weird wonders the city has to offer. In the end, the real hero in this book is the city itself, and when you finally get to that North Gate, you might just want to turn back and adventure in the Cityport of Traps some more, whether you've found the spell lines or not.

WARREN MCGUIRE

2

THE

After battling the way through the previous parts of Steve Jackson's *Sorcery!* series, there's nothing that makes you take a deep breath quite like the illustration for paragraph 1 of the final chapter in the quartet of books. For in the distance, barely visible atop the misty crags of the Zanzunu Peaks, sits Mampang Fortress: the object of your quest. As Jackson's prose states however, it is an image that, rather than make you want to slap yourself on the back, makes you want to run back the way you came and tell the King of Analand to sod his Crown of Kings.

Yet go on you must, your mind racing with what dangers lurk inside the fortress as you make your way through the mountains. Until you stumble off a cliff. Or die in a rock fall. Or find that the bridge that spans a perilous ravine doesn't actually exist once you're halfway across it. In fact, by the time you have figured out how on earth to actually get to the fortress without dying horribly, you'll be a nervous wreck.

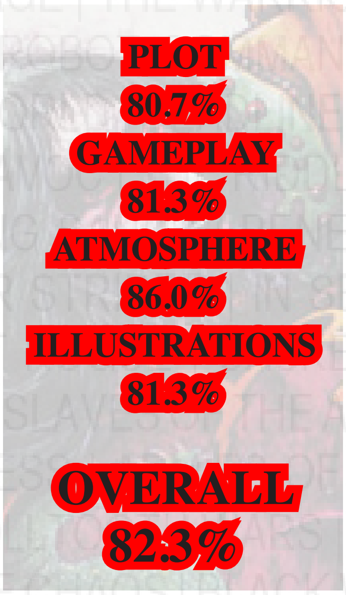
And that is the strength of *The Crown of Kings*. It makes you terrified to try anything as it's highly likely to end in sudden death. But it is to Steve Jackson's credit that these failures do not feel arbitrary. Rather than kill you off for turning left instead of right, you will find yourself greeted with failure for being overconfident in your abilities, taking what you see at face value or, more often than not, putting your trust in the wrong denizen of the fortress.

And make no mistake: you are not amongst friends in Mampang. Yet neither are you really amongst enemies most of the time. Even if your arrival and the purpose of your mission is common knowledge (which it will be unless you managed to put a stop to the Archmage's magical serpents in the previous volume) most of Mampang's citizens don't really seem that bothered that you're there. Oh sure, they'll rob you, kill you, torture you in a million exotic fashions, yet there's no real malice to it – they're just sick, twisted individuals who get their pleasure doing sick, twisted things. Even the Archmage himself seems more interested in having fun with you rather than killing you.

This is what makes Mampang stand out from the setting of every other *Fighting Fantasy* book. It's an evil place definitely, but it is not the old fashioned, honest evil encountered in Firetop Mountain or Port Blacksand. Instead there's a cloud of profound unwholesomeness that hangs over the whole fortress. There's just something very wrong about everything you encounter. Even the friendlier characters you will meet (and thankfully there are a few) feel warped in some way. In some respect, one can almost sympathise with the Archmage wanting possession of the Crown of Kings – it's about the only thing that could make one feel secure among this lot.

So, after finally working out how to gain entrance to the fortress, it is with a creeping dread that you realise that to get any further you're going to have to put your trust in someone in this unsavoury bunch, knowing that one false word or one misunderstanding will be your doom. Nothing feels safe in Mampang, the correct solution never obvious. More often, you will have to listen to your gut rather than logic in dealing with its denizens. Yet there is rationality to their actions. They may be psychos, but there is nearly always a motivation behind their psychosis although what that is isn't always apparent to the reader (at least, not until after he's got something horrible and pointy firmly inserted in his spleen!). And even after you think you've got them all figured out you often find out they have been playing you for a fool the whole time. While in other books in the series, such a feeling is more a cause of frustration, here the paranoia is oddly exciting, the omnipresent danger keeping you on your toes in the best possible way.

John Blanche's incredible artwork adds greatly to this sense of paranoia. Take, for example, his illustration of the hideous sub-human imprisoned in a pillory (paragraph 393). He looks pitiful, yet dangerous; moronic, yet with an obvious intelligence in his eyes. This creature could easily turn out to be a valuable ally or he could end up ripping your face off. Or see the Black Elves from paragraph 144. They look incredibly malicious and sadistic, yet there's an



PLOT
80.7%
GAMEPLAY
81.3%
ATMOSPHERE
86.0%
ILLUSTRATIONS
81.3%

OVERALL
82.3%

CROWN OF KINGS

odd wide-eyed innocence to them, as if they would not be evil at all if away from the pervading influence of Mampang. While Jackson's work in the *Sorcery!* cannot be commended highly enough, Blanche's contribution is just as important, his idiosyncratic art style making the series stand out even more than it would already. His art chaotic, unwholesome artwork perfectly matches the books' setting.

Mampang feels like a place that could exist, a sanctuary for all those who have walked the wrong paths in life. Jackson even provides them with kitchen and toilet facilities (those Orcs in Firetop Mountain never got that!).

The true brilliance of that setting is that no character in *The Crown of Kings* feels like a random insertion, each belongs here, each feels like they have a story to tell and each manages to be wholly repellant and wholly intriguing at the same time. In fact, there is an odd realism to *The Crown of Kings*. Mampang feels like a place that could exist, a sanctuary for all those who have walked the wrong paths in life. Jackson even provides them with kitchen and toilet facilities (those Orcs in Firetop Mountain never got that!).

But it is not the toilet that is the most memorable feature of the fortress itself (though it comes close). That honour belongs to the Throben Doors. These four doors, deadly to all those who do not know their secrets, separate Mampang into five distinct sections. While it is perhaps a valid criticism that the doors cause *The Crown of Kings* to be somewhat episodic in nature, it rather misses the point. There is nothing quite like the dread experienced before opening a Throben Door, one whose secret you're not altogether certain you've figured out, or the sense of relief to have one more door behind you, or indeed the shock at finding out that the information you had discovered about a particular door was a complete lie.

Because if there's one thing Steve Jackson is the undisputed master of the in the gamebook world it is the red herring (albeit Keith P. Philips could probably give him a run for his money!). The book repeatedly lulls you into a false sense of security before Jackson pulls the rug from under your feet in the most shocking way possible. And it all culminates in perhaps the biggest red herring in the history of *Fighting Fantasy*, a finale no-one was expecting on their first try.

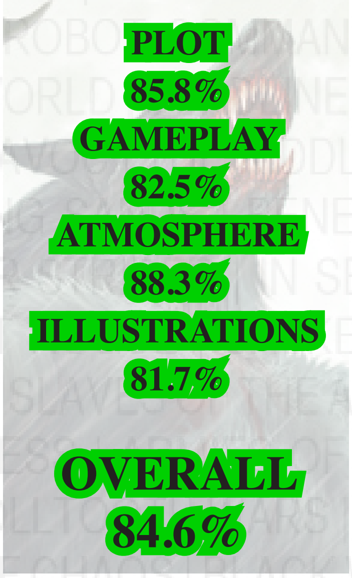
In many ways, the book can be seen as the successor to Jackson's earlier title *The Citadel of Chaos*. Both books featured a fortress populated by weirdos with no particular allegiance to their overlord. But while *The Citadel of Chaos* was hampered by its short length and bare-bones writing style, Jackson pulled out all the stops for *The Crown of Kings*. Its vibrant writing was matched by its staggering size: eight-hundred paragraphs, the largest ever *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, yet the book delivers in giving its readers breadth as well as length, never outstaying its welcome, yet feeling like a suitably epic climax to the series without ever railroading its readers as so many other gamebooks have fallen prey to doing.

The Crown of Kings is an undisputed masterpiece when it comes to atmosphere and gamebook design and the sense of paranoia that pervades it is something that no novel or video-game could ever capture. And that is why it firmly deserves its place among the top ten Fighting Fantasy books.

KIERAN COGHLAN

HOWL OF THE

There was a degree of inevitability to this book. *Fighting Fantasy* had already started upgrading the classic horror movie monsters from bit-part to major villains with the likes of *Vault of the Vampire* and *Curse of the Mummy*, so the wolfman was due a shot at the top billing. Of course, in many of the classic werewolf films, the monster is simultaneously villain and victim, and that made the plot of the lycanthropy-themed adventure obvious: a quest not to save the world, but to save yourself from the beast within.



PLOT

85.8%

GAMEPLAY

82.5%

ATMOSPHERE

88.3%

ILLUSTRATIONS

81.7%

OVERALL

84.6%

It was also the next logical stage in the evolution of the werewolf in *Fighting Fantasy*. Way back when the first adventurer ventured into Firetop Mountain, the were-foes were generic mid-range monsters, only really distinguishable from the bulk of the preceding opponents in that you could have a polite conversation with them before causing them to hulk out into beast form and getting into a fight. The next encounter, in *The Forest of Doom*, brought in the infectious aspect of the condition, which was subsequently upgraded to potential grounds for autofail. This 'kill or cure' scenario expanded into a minor side quest in *Vault*, and after that, the *Fighting Fantasy* werewolf couldn't really develop any further except by becoming the principal villain. The 'big bad' wolf, as it were.

The idea's time had come. So much so, in fact, that I'd already started working on the concept of an *Fighting Fantasy* adventure with the hero as werewolf back when *Howl of the Werewolf* was first announced. To be honest, I was somewhat peeved to hear the news. Partly because I'd been pipped at the post, and partly because the new *Fighting Fantasy* adventures that had come out since the series' revival hadn't been all that encouraging. *Eye of the Dragon* was a bog-standard dungeon crawl, written by Ian Livingstone both before and long after his prime, while *Bloodbones* was a typical Jonathan Green difficulty-fest that had no chance of ever living up to the expectations formed during the decade in which it was the legendary 'lost' adventure. I was too much of a completist to consider not getting the book when it came out, but I had little hope of its being anything special. Sometimes it's wonderful to learn that you're wrong.

One very significant fact that I'd overlooked was that *Howl* would be the first genuinely new *Fighting Fantasy* book. *Eye* had some new material, but that was written to fit in with an adventure originally constructed before the series had even ventured above ground. Whatever changes *Bloodbones* had gone through between the first draft and publication, it was still at heart the book written in the dying days of the Puffin era, when the authors seemed to view their readers as the enemy. *Howl*, by contrast, was the product of a new century, and much had happened in the intervening years. Jonathan Green had had time in which to mature and develop as a writer. He'd also interacted with fandom and read some of his reviews and come to see that, despite what the letters page of *Warlock* magazine had implied back in the eighties, books that did nothing but kill the player character were not well loved.

More importantly, he paid attention to the criticisms of his books. That's not inherently a good thing – plenty of fictional series have suffered as a consequence of pandering to the fans – but he responded wisely to fan feedback, and that makes all the difference. While he took a variety of different complaints into account, the changes made to his gamebook-writing model could essentially be covered by one statement: gamebooks should be fun. Needing to throw just the right numbers during character generation to have even a slim chance of success is not fun. Being required to identify and then slavishly follow a very narrow 'true path' through the book is rarely fun (though good writing can cover over a multitude of sins in this area). Having less than 5% chance of winning even if you fulfil those criteria? Is. Not. Fun.

Thus, *Howl* modifies the rules to create a more balanced spread of SKILL scores. It has fights which the low-end characters still have a reasonable chance of winning, but also employs a *Daggers of Darkness*-esque wrinkle with the CHANGE score so there's still an element of hazard even for the tougher heroes.

Readers will be far more forgiving of an unplayable book with an enjoyable storyline than a functional game wedded to an unengaging plot. Thankfully, Howl is a good read regardless of how the dice fall for a number of reasons.

There are many viable paths to victory, and plenty of nonessential but potentially worthwhile side quests, so repeat attempts need not involve doing exactly the same things time after time. And while random dice rolls still play a part in determining your character's fate, the less desirable outcomes tend to be inconveniencing rather than lethal. This book is re-playable because there's so much to explore, not because it takes several dozen attempts to figure out what you should be doing, and then a few score more (or a lot of cheating) to reach the end intact.

There are those who complain that *Howl* goes too far in toning down the harshness, and isn't challenging enough. Still, the right level of difficulty is a very subjective thing – I've seen some fans dismiss *Temple of Terror* and *Seas of Blood* as too easy – and considering the number of *Fighting Fantasy* books which any player, no matter how strong on initial dice rolls, has only a negligible chance of getting through, a new book that you have a realistic chance of winning isn't such a terrible thing. Besides, the set of silver daggers scattered throughout the book provides an easy way of making the book tougher if that's what you want. Just tell yourself that for a true victory you have to get all of the daggers, and it becomes a lot less of a walkover.

Of course, gameplay isn't the only thing that matters. Readers will be far more forgiving of an unplayable book with an enjoyable storyline than a functional game wedded to an unengaging plot. Thankfully, *Howl* is a good read regardless of how the dice fall for a number of reasons.

There's a personal element to many of the best gamebooks, and *Howl* is no exception. As is often the case, you're a sword-for-hire, but this time round your motivation is neither altruism nor avarice, and your primary client is yourself. And that's what is at stake: your self. You stand to lose your sanity, your will, your individuality, and your very humanity. It matters little to the world at large whether you succeed or fail in your quest – sure, some of the downtrodden people of Lupravia may have their lot improved a little if you do bring down the villains who rule over them, but the balance of good and evil will barely shift either way – and yet it is everything to you.

The principal villains also have more mundane and believable goals than the average *Fighting Fantasy* bad guy. Yes, they want power, but they're content with a manageable amount of it, rather than seeking the administrative headache that world domination would be. They also have a history, details of which can be unearthed in various different places along the way, providing another 'Easter egg' for readers who want more from their gamebooks than just reasonable odds of reaching the victory section intact.

Similarly, many of the temporary allies you can encounter in the course of your quest have a little more substance than some of the friends found in earlier books. There is often more hinted at than revealed, which is all for the better. We don't, for example, need to have Ulrich's past explained in detail; the hints that some shameful secret is the source of his unfortunate state are enough to flesh him out, and a detailed account would risk undermining the tragic side of his story with mawkishness, bathos or sympathy-destroying unpleasantness.

And what of the adventure itself? Well, it's not *Fighting Fan-*

REACTION

FIGHTING FANTASY
HOWL OF THE WEREWOLF

Jonathan Green
(Author)

I am absolutely thrilled that *Howl of the Werewolf* has been voted Number One in the *Fighting Fantazine* readers' poll! The book has a very special place in my heart as it was the first truly original gamebook I had written in over ten years, and I feel it is one of my best. I tried very hard to learn from the mistakes of the past and make *Howl* a truly interactive and thoroughly enjoyable experience, including the ability for the player to go back and enjoy the adventure in an entirely different way. It also provided the perfect opportunity for me to indulge myself in all things lycanthropic – not to mention gothic!

Thanks to everyone who voted and here's hoping that *Fighting Fantasy* continues to go from strength to strength with the approach of the series' 30th anniversary in 2012!

Nick Sidwell
(Outgoing Wizard Books *Fighting Fantasy* Editor)

As some of you may know, I was the editor of *Fighting Fantasy* between 2009 and 2010. During this time we changed the jackets (for better or worse!), took *Fighting Fantasy* to some fantastic events and, most importantly, brought two superb new titles to the series – *Stormslayer* and *Night of the Necromancer*.

I am no longer with *Fighting Fantasy*, but just before I left, Alex told me that *Howl of the Werewolf* had been voted favourite *Fighting Fantasy* book by you

tasy's first foray into Hammer Horror territory, but it's almost certainly the most enthusiastic. Apart from the inevitable plethora of lycanthropes (a satisfyingly diverse range of were-beasts, which maintains a good level of variety without resorting to absurdities such as the werecamel and were-salmon that cropped up in a were-heavy fantasy novel I once read), there are plenty of the usual suspects: sinister circuses, non-sparkly vampires, madmen seeking to raise the dead via science rather than sorcery... Which is not to say that it's all familiar stuff. Mr Green has sought inspiration for new foes and encounters in all sorts of places, from obscure niches of folklore to creepy advertising campaigns, thereby providing Titanographers with plenty of new horrors to add to their bestiaries. Some might object that the Changeling bears little resemblance to the version in *Fighting Fantasy – The Introductory Role-playing Game* and *Out of the Pit*, but this take on the creature returns to the legends which inspired the earlier variant, and has a life-cycle that actually makes some sense, so I see the change as an improvement.

Then there are the set pieces, from the opening attack of the Black Wolf (a more plot-significant encounter than any previous instance of Jon Green's customary 'in at the deep end' section 1 adversary) through to the climactic confrontation with the Alpha werewolf and the source of his power. These play a big part in making *Howl* such a rollicking adventure, ensuring that your journey towards your nemesis is never uneventful, and providing minor victories and setbacks to raise and dash your hopes along the way. For thrills and spills, it's hard to beat the journey from Vargenhof to Wulfenstein, which has you battling the Werebeast atop an out-of-control stagecoach careering along the edge of a ravine. Not exactly *Fighting Fantasy* at its most thought provoking, but it's a good deal more entertaining than a trek in which you do nothing more exciting than cross off a portion or two of Provisions.

It would be remiss of me to say nothing of the illustrations which give face and form to so many of the book's characters and creatures. While they don't have quite the same texture and detail as Martin McKenna's earlier works for the range, there are some impressive pieces in there, and they make a significant contribution to the atmosphere of the adventure. Personal favourites include the attacking Werebear which is reminiscent of *House of Hell*'s nightmare fuel Zombie, the grotesque Wax Golem, and the most sinister Mister Punch I've ever seen. That's the way to do it!

I must confess that I was a little surprised to learn that *Howl* had come first in the poll. I'm not saying that it doesn't deserve to be there, just that I didn't expect it to fare quite so well against such established 'classics' as *Deathtrap Dungeon* and *Creature of Havoc*. Nostalgia is a powerful thing, often making flaws seem less significant, and even exaggerating merits. So how did this newcomer end up beating books that have had decades to root themselves in the readers' affections?

The voting system may well have helped. Separately rating assorted characteristics of the books can produce very different results from a simple, 'How much do I like this book?', effectively distinguishing 'favourite' from 'best'. Overall impressions are influenced more by some factors that others; there are, for example, some fans who can forgive the virtual impossibility of fairly beating *Crypt of the Sorcerer* because

> **Nostalgia is a powerful thing, often making flaws seem less significant, and even exaggerating merits. So how did this newcomer end up beating books that have had decades to root themselves in the readers' affections?**

they like the story so much. But when the gamebook experience is broken down into its constituent elements, a book that gets 8s and 9s across the board will do better than one that gets a couple of 10s and a few 5s and 6s. The hero with 11 SKILL might not win as many Attack Rounds as his 12-point opponent, but if he has a significantly higher STAMINA, he's still in with a good chance of prevailing. Especially if he has a double-figure LUCK as well.

The system rewards consistency, which adds a degree of thematic appropriateness to *Howl*'s victory, as consistency is what the book is about on some levels. Change is a bad thing for your character, and success means getting to stay more or less as you were at the start. That's not to say that the book is overly conservative and reactionary, though. The state in which you find the different members of the Cadre Infernal is a clear reminder that without change comes not stasis but stagnation. By ridding the world of the corrupt, distorted figures they have become, you do them a favour as well as the people who have suffered from their efforts to cling onto what they have at all costs. *Howl* shows both that there are things worth preserving, and there are things which must be brought to an end.

Ultimately, the book's message is one of hope. The situation may be bad, but you still have a chance to change things for the better. I could try to draw a parallel with the *Fighting Fantasy* range itself, pointing out that, though the series looked doomed, the support of the fans helped sustain the recent revival long enough to see new books published, including the poll-winner. But it's bigger than that. However monstrous the future may appear, whatever unpleasant changes might be going on in our lives, we are not completely helpless, and while our efforts aren't guaranteed to end in success, they're not inevitably doomed either.

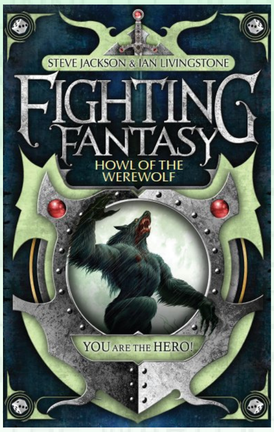
ED JOLLEY

guys. Firstly, great choice! It's an awesome book and a brilliant example of Jon Green's imagination and skill with the gaming system of *Fighting Fantasy*. But as well as this, it was a choice that made me proud of what Wizard has done with the series. It's always a tough call taking over something as loved and admired as *Fighting Fantasy*. It felt like a rocky road at times, some fans loving what we were doing, some fiercely protective of the old legacy. I'd love to say we please everyone but I doubt that's true!

So this accolade means a lot because it shows that Wizard has achieved what we always hoped – it has added to a series that means so much to so many people. It's a great way to leave *Fighting Fantasy* to the hands of another and I hope that in another 29 years time (yep, 30th birthday next year for Zagor!), fans are as passionate about the Wizard books as they are about the originals.

Enjoy the coming books in 2010 and may your STAMINA never fail!

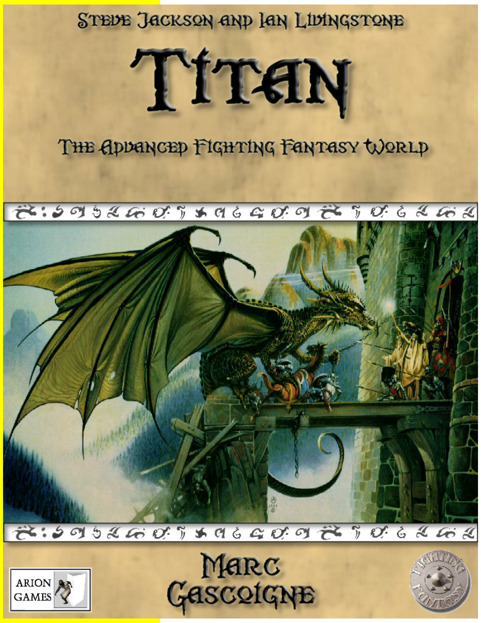
STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
HOWL OF THE WEREWOLF
BRAND NEW ADVENTURE
A Fighting Fantasy Gamebook in which YOU are the hero!
SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION



Revised Fighting Fantasy

PUTTING A NEW SPIN ON ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY

***Graham Bottley** is the man behind the forthcoming relaunch of **Advanced Fighting Fantasy** from Arion Games. He was available to be quickly questioned by **Fighting Fantazine** about this undertaking and here are the results...*


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
TITAN
The Advanced Fighting Fantasy World
Marc Gascoigne
ARION GAMES

How did you become involved?
Arion Games is, generally, me. There are other fringe members who do some excellent work, but the main core of the business is all me!

What can you tell us about the origin and purpose behind Arion Games?
Arion Games was established five years ago, initially to produce paper miniatures. I was making quite a few for my own games, and I decided to put some on the market. When those were doing very well indeed, I decided to branch out a little and republished the *Maelstrom* RPG, which led to a *Rolemaster* book and another *Maelstrom* book... Anyway, actual games now seems to be an entrenched part of Arion Games, especially "Old School", and if we can get older games back into the limelight and played heavily again, we will all be happy.

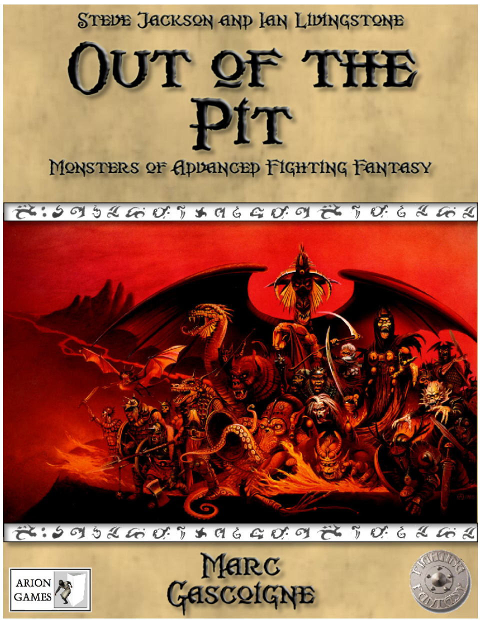
Given posts on the official website in the past, is David Holt involved in this revision of *AFF*?
Not in any official capacity, however he has seen most of the material so far due to his unparalleled knowledge of Titan and *Fighting Fantasy*.

Originally *AFF* was published by Puffin alongside the gamebooks. Does it feel awkward to be publishing *AFF* opposite Wizard Books and the gamebooks?
Not at all. They have the printing and distribution capabilities to publish the gamebooks, but as far as I am aware had no interest in either *AFF*, *Out of the Pit* or *Titan*. I have talked several times with Wizard Books, and we will almost certainly do cross-promotion and other collaboration.

What books can we expect in May?
Exact publication dates are slightly out of my control, but what I can say is that we will be publishing a new *AFF* core book,

What prompted Arion to look at republishing *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* (*AFF*)?
As with many Gamers, my first intro to RPG's was through the *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks; in my case it was *The Forest of Doom*. *Fighting Fantasy – The Role-playing Game* (with the Tigerman on the cover) was one of my earliest real RPG's, and I had a lot of fun with *AFF*. Fast forward a lot of years, and with *Maelstrom* selling so well and so fondly remembered, *AFF* seemed a logical follow-up.

Has their been any correspondence/consultation with original *AFF* writers Gascoigne & Tamm?
Not as yet. Most of my correspondence has been with Steve Jackson up to this point, but before the release I hope to get input from as many of the original *Fighting Fantasy* writers as possible.


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
OUT OF THE PIT
Monsters of Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Marc Gascoigne
ARION GAMES

Preliminary cover designs for the books planned to relaunch the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* concept.

with revised Hero generation, revised Magic, completely new Priest rules, Director guides etc. Much of this is based upon the original three books, with some brand new material. *Out of the Pit* and *Titan* will be straight reprints of the originals; the only things we will change in those will be typos.

However, the aim is to produce a second volume of each, with later monsters, later history and later information. This should bring Titan right up to date.

How will *AFF* be published?
As physical books only. This was one of the conditions of the license, and although this marks a departure from our normal operations, is nevertheless very exciting. The print/distribution agreement with Cubicle 7 means we should have worldwide exposure.

Whose interior art survives into the reprints, Sibbick or Nicholson or both?
Hopefully both. Still one or two things to be ironed out and layout finalised, but we are reusing as much art as possible. Russ Nicholson is also working on the cover at the moment...

What was the guiding idea/principle behind the revision of *AFF*?
My original playtest notes said: "Otherwise, the goal is to keep the new system as compatible with the original adventures and *Out of the Pit* as much as possible, whilst bringing it right up to date." We want to keep it recognisably *AFF* whilst making it more streamlined and focused. The playtests seem to bear this out.

Is WITS included as a character trait?
It isn't. Primarily for reasons discussed above.

Why bring in the *Sorcery!* spell system, as opposed to those of *The Citadel of Chaos* or *Scorpion Swamp*, or inventing a new one?
The *Sorcery!* epic were my favourite books, and I loved the magic system. *The Sorcery Spell Book* is a work of art in its own right, and the system provides a nice contrast to the Wizardry system from the original game.

Does "Minor Magic" survive into the new *AFF*?
It does. Rest assured though that we have given the system an overhaul and revised many of the spells themselves.

Are there any additional attributes?
Not really. Magic has been retained from the *AFF* books, and we have added in MAGIC POINTS, as an alternative to using STAMINA for Wizardry. Otherwise, the characteristics are the same as the original *AFF*.

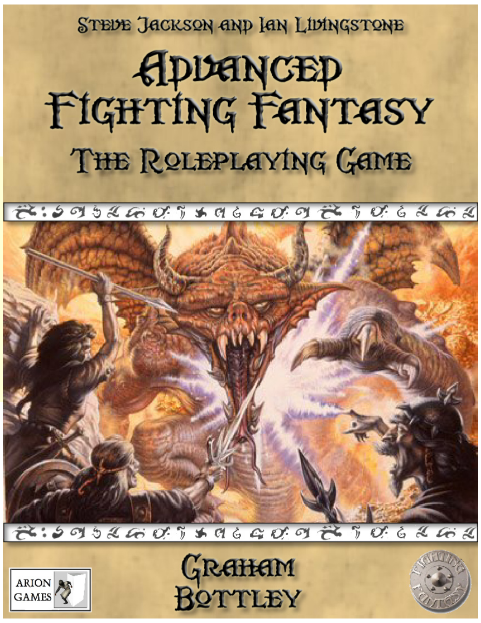
What can you tell us about the new character generation system?
We have obviously fixed the 6+d6 SKILL issue, have added in *Talents*, have refined the *Special Skills* list and made it a point-buy type process. Starting Heroes are less powerful than could be found before, so we get more of an increasing power scale as the campaign progresses. The new system provides a bit more balance across an adventuring party, but still allows individualization.

Are the original example adventures retained?
We have not included the adventures from the three core books, although there will be an intro adventure. They may well reappear at some point though.

Any plans for *AFF* miniatures?
This is something we have thought long and hard about and there may be a way to do this!

Are there plans for modules based on the core system books and how far off would they be? Would you create *AFF* equivalents of the Myridador d20 adaptations of *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks?
Once the original releases are out of the way, we would then be planning several more books. One that I desperately want to do is a Crown of Kings mini-campaign book, powered by *AFF* this time. Jamie Wallis (ex of Myriador) is a collaborator on several non-*AFF* projects, and he is also very keen on this idea. The hope would be to have this out for Christmas 2011.

You've mentioned online the possibility of *The Riddling Reaver* being adapted to the new *AFF* rules. Would you consider do the same to *Fighting Fantasy - The Role-playing Game* and the various mini multi-player adventures published in *Warlock* magazine?
Fighting Fantasy - The Role-playing Game is of course the simplest version of the *Fighting Fantasy* rules. There will be a version of this in the *AFF* core book, along with an introductory adventure, for the new players to the game. This will then lead smoothly into the full *AFF* rules! I hadn't considered the mini-games from *Warlock* if I am honest, but I have all of the issues, and there will be further rules options in a later book, so you never know.



Would you look to outside writers for future material, or is the plan to keep things "in-house" as it were?
We are more than happy to talk to outside writers, although we would probably not solicit them as such. If someone has a good idea for a book/adventure/product etc, and it fits with our plans, we are more than happy to consider this. We do have a list of things we want to produce in house, but for anything else, fire away!

Fighting Fantazine *would like to thank Graham Bottley for taking the time to answer the questions put to him by the magazine. Meanwhile, readers can keep abreast of future* AFF *development by visiting the following website and clicking on the* AFF *link: www.arion-games.com/*

THE ADVENTURE GAME

How to Write Your Own *Fighting Fantasy* Gamebook

In the second part of his article on gamebook writing, **Andrew Wright** explains the various important points of the planning stage of your adventure....

In the previous issue of *Fighting Fantazine*, we began learning how to write your own *Fighting Fantasy* adventures. Specifically, we looked at Stage One: The Idea, which is the dreamy and creative part where you scribbled down all your thoughts for your future brilliant gamebook! In this part, we start committing seriously to the enterprise through Stage Two: The Planning.

Aside from actually writing the adventure, this stage is probably the most important part of the whole process. My own personal experience suggests that if you don't sort out the planning to your total satisfaction, you probably won't finish your adventure. Conversely, if you develop a well-thought out plan, it becomes so much easier and enjoyable to write and complete your own personal gamebook epic. To cite an old teachers' quote: "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!"

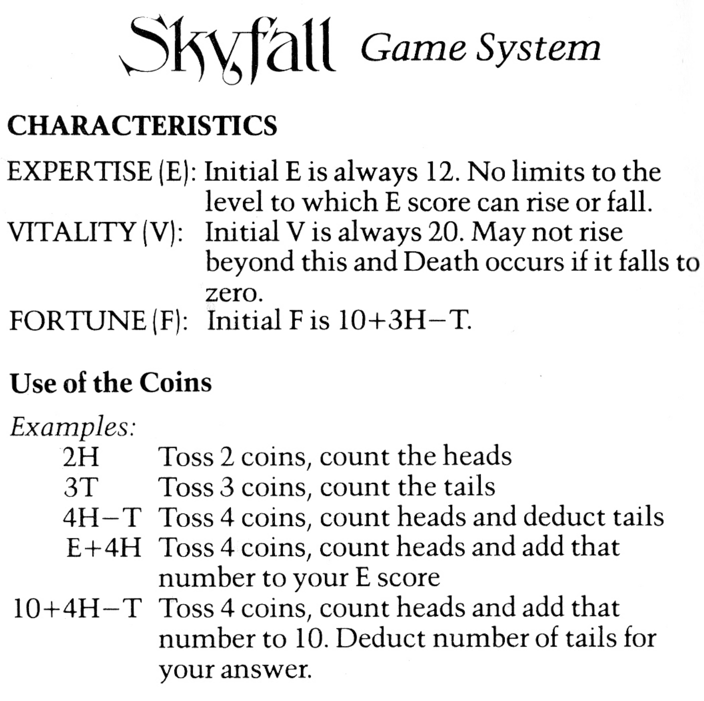
Stage Two: The Planning

Planning your gamebook adventure is when you take all your ideas and start to give them form and structure. It incorporates all the physical aspects of your gamebook – how long it is, what rules it uses, and so on – this equals gamebook structure. Planning also involves considering the more aesthetic principles of gamebook design – is it linear or are there multiple paths, for example – which can be thought of as gamebook form. Both aspects of this planning process are considered in more detail below.

GAMEBOOK STRUCTURE

In a fairly rough order of importance, the following points are all things I consider when planning the structure of my gamebook.

Rules. What rules system will your adventure gamebook use? The *Fighting Fantasy* rules, or those from another series, such as *Lone Wolf*, *Fabled Lands* or *The Way of the Tiger*? Will there be no rules at all, or will it be a system you've created yourself. Will the rules use dice, or some other method of random number generation, such as the coin-tossing system in *The Legends of Skyfall* (see *Figure 1*)? Will it be a completely diceless gamebook, like the *Virtual Reality* series? As corollaries to this, the more popular the rules (such as *Fighting Fantasy*), the easier it will be for people to pick up and play your adventure. If you decide to use your own system however, you're going to have to do plenty of play testing to iron out all the bugs before dropping it into your gamebook. In addition, make sure you know all the rules well, and look for ways to incorporate them into your adventure. For example, the *Fighting Fantasy* system contains rules for *Escaping* and using LUCK in combat,



Skyfall *Game System*

CHARACTERISTICS

EXPERTISE (E): Initial E is always 12. No limits to the level to which E score can rise or fall.
VITALITY (V): Initial V is always 20. May not rise beyond this and Death occurs if it falls to zero.
FORTUNE (F): Initial F is 10+3H−T.

Use of the Coins

Examples:

2H	Toss 2 coins, count the heads
3T	Toss 3 coins, count the tails
4H−T	Toss 4 coins, count heads and deduct tails
E+4H	Toss 4 coins, count heads and add that number to your E score
10+4H−T	Toss 4 coins, count heads and add that number to 10. Deduct number of tails for your answer.

Figure 1: **This shows the coin-tossing system used to generate random numbers, from *The Legends of Skyfall* gamebook series. Could this be a viable alternative to rolling dice?**

Scans: © Andrew Wright, 2011

both of which appear somewhat underused in many *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, both official and amateur. Be aware of how the rules will dictate the structure of your adventure. Again, looking at *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, a fair number of your paragraph choices are going to be given over to the consequences of battles, escaping from battles, taking SKILL tests, taking LUCK tests, and making inventory checks. Used properly, the rules system is a powerful part of your gamebook as it can work with your writing to create tension and excitement. So, we say again, know your rules well!

Size. How big is your adventure? The standard measurement is to count how many numbered paragraphs there are. Will it be the default meme-like 400 paragraphs beloved of *Fighting Fantasy*, or will it be just 100 sections, so that you can submit it to Wayne Densley for his annual Windhammer Prize competition? Will it be 200 paragraphs so you can send it in to these hallowed pages of *Fighting Fantazine*, or the micro 25 to 50 paragraphs that Wizard Books seem to favour in their interminable "competitions"? Obviously, in selecting the size of your gamebook, you are choosing how much work you're going to have to do to write it, and how long that writing will take before you finish. A 400 paragraph adventure is essentially a book, a 200 paragraph adventure a novella, and anything smaller a short story. If this is your first attempt, I'd suggest starting small as there's more chance of successfully finishing it. More on this topic will be covered in Stage Five: The Writing, in later issues of *Fighting Fantazine*.

Depth. If size is how big your adventure is, depth is the amount of individual choices it contains. Essentially, depth is the average number of paragraphs you want to devote to each encounter in your gamebook (in earlier, dungeon-crawling times, these encounters would have been called 'rooms'). A fairly basic option, consistent with some of the first books in the *Fighting Fantasy* series would be to allow 5 paragraphs per encounter, broken down as follows:

- Initial encounter
- Fight
- Fight resolution
- Talk or bribe
- Talk or bribe resolution

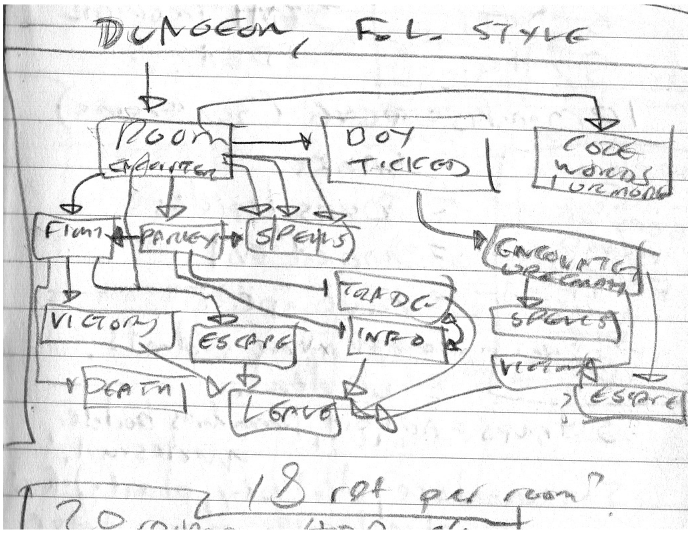


Figure 2: **A rough sketch of a *Fabled Lands* style flowchart demonstrating how you could use up to 20 paragraphs per encounter to create gamebook depth.**

More sophisticated later gamebooks, such as the *Fabled Lands* series, might use up to twenty or more paragraphs per encounter, such as the following (and see *Figure 2*):

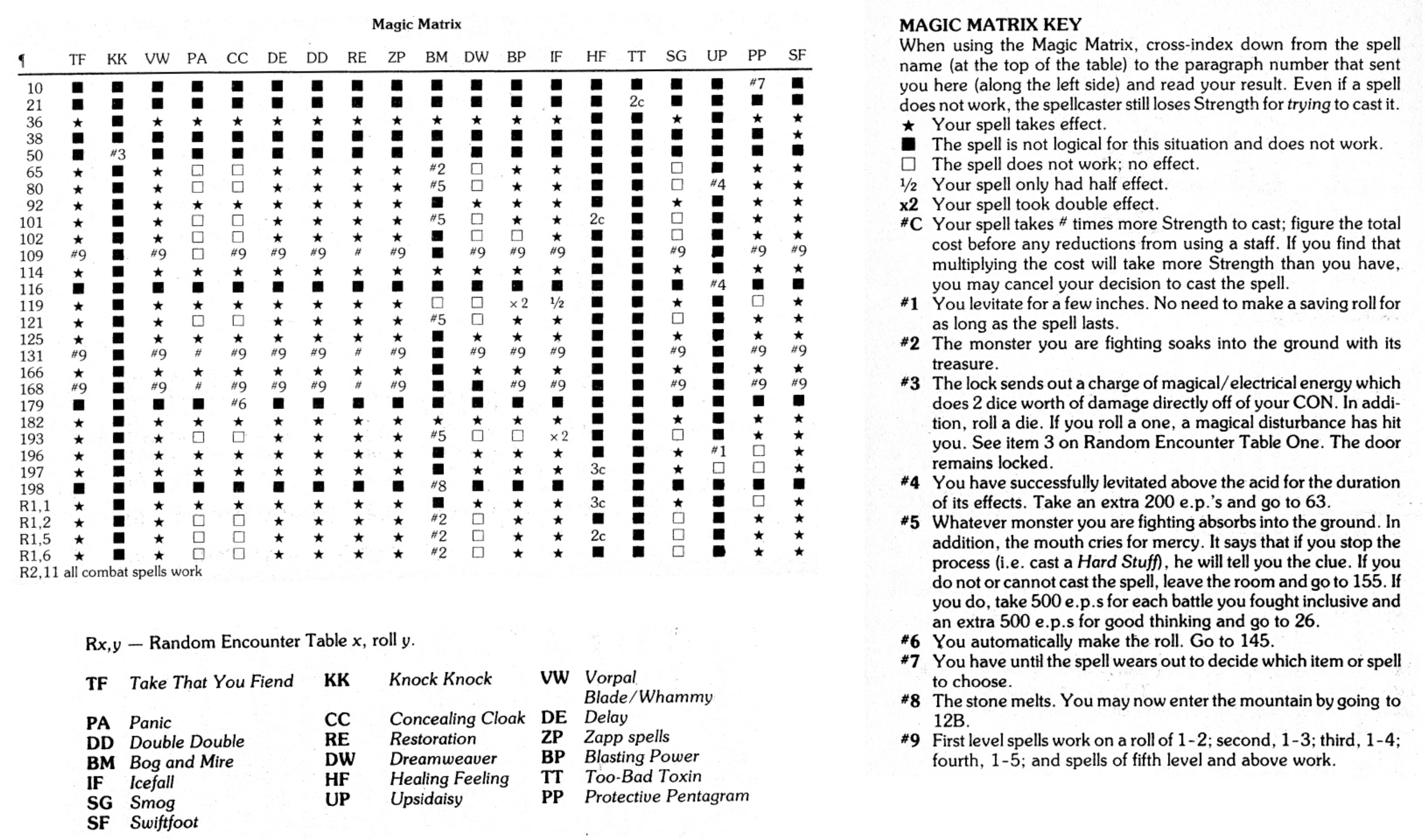
- Initial encounter
- Fight
- Fight resolution
- Escape
- Talk or bribe
- Talk or bribe resolution: Trade
- Talk or bribe resolution: Information
- Cast spell
- Spell 1
- Spell 2
- Spell 3
- Secondary encounter (if box ticked)
    - ◊ Fight
    - ◊ Fight resolution etc.
- Tertiary encounter (if possess certain codewords)
    - ◊ Fight
    - ◊ Fight resolution etc.

So, when considering your gamebook's depth, you need to decide if it will be fairly shallow, with lots of encounters but not much to do with them, or very deep, with fewer encounters but more options.

Volume. This is simply how many encounters will be in your adventure, and can be found by dividing the total paragraph number of your adventure with the number of paragraphs per encounter. For example, if you've decided to write a 400 paragraph gamebook with around 5 paragraphs per encounter, this will give you 80 encounters to work with. If on the other hand you prefer 20 paragraphs per encounter, you'll have 20 encounters to plan. One good strategy at this point is to look at your ideas from Stage One and look at how many encounters you already have ideas for. This will help you decide on both the size and depth, and thus volume, of your gamebook adventure.

Word Count. The best way to look at this to consider how many words you want to write per paragraph, as this will then give you a good idea about how much work you're letting yourself in for. I personally aim for 100 words per section, so a full-blooded 400 paragraph adventure clocks in at 40,000+ words. However, word count can vary considerably. Early adventures in *Warlock* magazine, anything by Ian Livingstone, and a lot of the *Fabled Lands* adventure text, to take three disparate examples, are all fairly lean in terms of word count per paragraph. Some readers prefer fewer words, particularly if they have to keep re-reading them whenever they die and start again with a new character. Other readers enjoy lots of words as they feel it immerses them more fully in the story elements of your gamebook adventure. In the end however, word count is down to your personal choice in terms of how much you want to write and what you feel confident writing about.

Spells. One last point about structure applies only if you've introduced magic spells into the rules, although it could also cover an array of chosen skills, or an inventory of specialized items. Simply put, if your character can cast spells, how much of the gamebook will you devote to describing their



Magic Matrix

¶	TF	KK	VW	PA	CC	DE	DD	RE	ZP	BM	DW	BP	IF	HF	TT	SG	UP	PP	SF
10	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	#7	■
21	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	2c	■	■	■	■
36	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	■	★	■	★	★
38	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	★
50	■	#3	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
65	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#2	□	★	★	■	■	□	■	★	★
80	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#5	□	★	★	■	■	□	#4	★	★
92	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	★	★	★	■	■	★	■	★	★
101	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#5	□	★	★	2c	■	□	■	★	★
102	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	■	□	□	★	■	■	□	■	★	★
109	#9	■	#9	□	#9	#9	#9	#	#9	■	#9	#9	#9	■	■	#9	■	#9	#9
114	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	■	★	■	★	★
116	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	#4	■	■
119	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	□	□	× 2	½	■	■	★	■	□	★
121	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#5	□	★	★	■	■	□	■	★	★
125	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	★	★	★	■	■	★	■	★	★
131	#9	■	#9	#	#9	#9	#9	#	#9	■	#9	#9	#9	■	■	#9	■	#9	#9
166	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	★	★	★	■	■	★	■	★	★
168	#9	■	#9	#	#9	#9	#9	#	#9	■	■	#9	#9	■	■	#9	■	#9	#9
179	■	■	■	■	#6	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
182	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	■	★	■	★	★
193	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#5	□	□	× 2	■	■	□	■	★	★
196	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	★	★	★	■	■	★	#1	□	★
197	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	★	★	★	3c	■	★	□	□	★
198	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	#8	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
R1,1	★	■	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	■	★	★	★	3c	■	★	■	□	★
R1,2	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#2	□	★	★	■	■	□	■	★	★
R1,5	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#2	□	★	★	2c	■	□	■	★	★
R1,6	★	■	★	□	□	★	★	★	★	#2	□	★	★	■	■	□	■	★	★

R2,11 all combat spells work

Rx,y — Random Encounter Table x, roll y.

TF	*Take That You Fiend*	**KK**	*Knock Knock*	**VW**	*Vorpal Blade/Whammy*
PA	*Panic*	**CC**	*Concealing Cloak*	**DE**	*Delay*
DD	*Double Double*	**RE**	*Restoration*	**ZP**	*Zapp spells*
BM	*Bog and Mire*	**DW**	*Dreamweaver*	**BP**	*Blasting Power*
IF	*Icefall*	**HF**	*Healing Feeling*	**TT**	*Too-Bad Toxin*
SG	*Smog*	**UP**	*Upsidaisy*	**PP**	*Protective Pentagram*
SF	*Swiftfoot*				

MAGIC MATRIX KEY

When using the Magic Matrix, cross-index down from the spell name (at the top of the table) to the paragraph number that sent you here (along the left side) and read your result. Even if a spell does not work, the spellcaster still loses Strength for *trying* to cast it.

★ Your spell takes effect.
■ The spell is not logical for this situation and does not work.
□ The spell does not work; no effect.
½ Your spell only had half effect.
x2 Your spell took double effect.
#C Your spell takes # times more Strength to cast; figure the total cost before any reductions from using a staff. If you find that multiplying the cost will take more Strength than you have, you may cancel your decision to cast the spell.
#1 You levitate for a few inches. No need to make a saving roll for as long as the spell lasts.
#2 The monster you are fighting soaks into the ground with its treasure.
#3 The lock sends out a charge of magical/electrical energy which does 2 dice worth of damage directly off of your CON. In addition, roll a die. If you roll a one, a magical disturbance has hit you. See item 3 on Random Encounter Table One. The door remains locked.
#4 You have successfully levitated above the acid for the duration of its effects. Take an extra 200 e.p.'s and go to 63.
#5 Whatever monster you are fighting absorbs into the ground. In addition, the mouth cries for mercy. It says that if you stop the process (i.e. cast a *Hard Stuff*), he will tell you the clue. If you do not or cannot cast the spell, leave the room and go to 155. If you do, take 500 e.p.s for each battle you fought inclusive and an extra 500 e.p.s for good thinking and go to 26.
#6 You automatically make the roll. Go to 145.
#7 You have until the spell wears out to decide which item or spell to choose.
#8 The stone melts. You may now enter the mountain by going to 12B.
#9 First level spells work on a roll of 1-2; second, 1-3; third, 1-4; fourth, 1-5; and spells of fifth level and above work.

Figure 3: **An example of a magic matrix for determining the effects of spell-casting in a fantasy gamebook. This example comes from the *Tunnels & Trolls* solo adventure *The Amulet of the Salkti*. The left-most column of the matrix lists the paragraphs where you can cast spells, while the spells themselves are listed across the top-most row as abbreviations (which are in turn explained beneath the matrix). A matrix key on the right tells you the result of casting a specific spell at any given paragraph number.**

effects? With *Shrine of the Salamander*, I budgeted for around a quarter of the paragraphs, so 50 of 200 sections were devoted to spell effects. However, this was limiting and meant that plenty of encounters had no spell options, even if it seemed they should. Another alternative is to follow the *Sorcery!* model and allocate plenty of spell references in addition to the rest of the gamebook. So a 400 paragraph adventure, with say 30 encounters and 3 spell options per encounter, adds another 90 paragraphs to your gamebook's total size. Another method, often favoured by the *Tunnels & Trolls* gamebooks, is to construct a matrix of encounter locations versus available spells to cast there, and standardize the spell effects as either notes on the matrix or reusable paragraphs (see *Figure 3*). This method cuts down on your gamebook size, but adds another level of rules complexity to it.

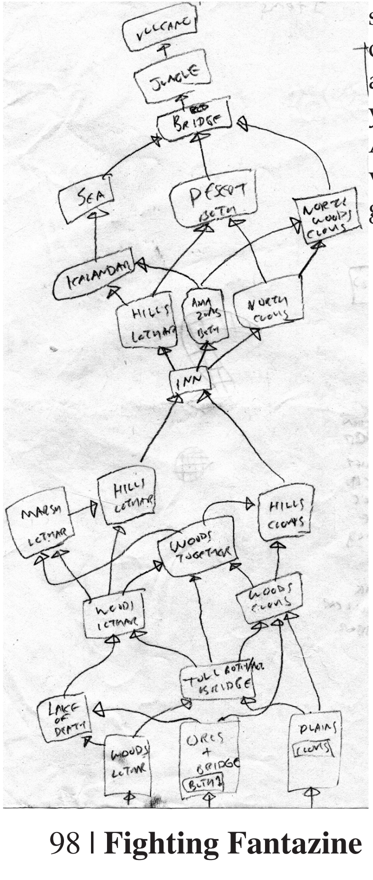


Figure 4: **This is an example of a linear gamebook path, representing a master map of the various locations in the *Fighting Fantasy* two-player boxed set *Clash of the Princes*. Although we can see that there are three separate entrances to this composite adventure at the bottom of the diagram (as well as numerous branches and re-branches), eventually the linear path funnels itself towards the bridge, jungle and volcano locations at the top of the diagram.**

GAMEBOOK FORM

The form your gamebook takes is less concrete than its structure and more a series of design decisions in terms of what style you want to write and what you think your readers want to play. It's also very fluid and several different styles could be mixed up within the one adventure. Below are some of the form and style decisions you may have to consider when planning your next gamebook opus.

Location versus Time. These terms refer to the nature of the encounters you have planned for your adventure. Are they places that must be visited? These can be considered location-based, and an example of this is my own *RAMPAGE!* adventure where you wander the streets of Boulder Ford visiting Gastromo's Tower, the Blue Crab Tavern, or the Temple of Goff. On the other hand, if your adventure encounters are a series of events that happen to your hero, then this can be considered a time-based gamebook. Time could even be measured in specific units within your adventure, such as the hourglass diagram in *Slaves of the Abyss*, the different times of the day in *The Black Lobster*, or your AGE score in *The Crimson Tide* (perhaps the most time-based gamebook of them all, particularly from a long-term viewpoint). There's no reason why you can't combine both ideas, and have a series of locations that must be visited within a specific timeframe, but as

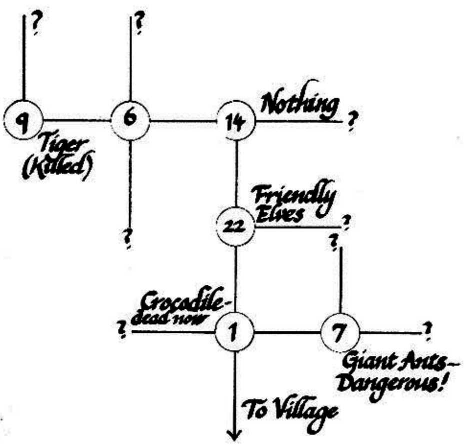
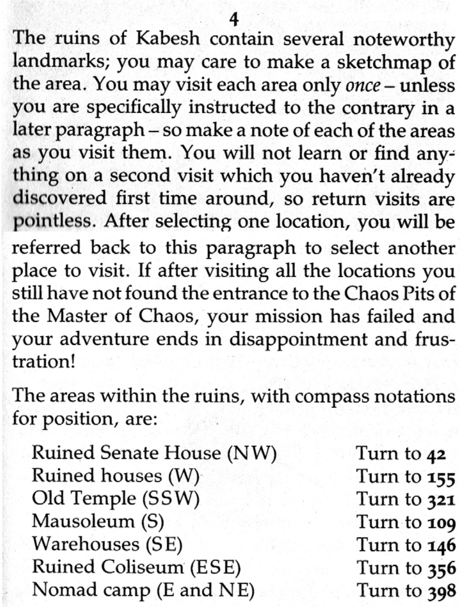


Figure 5: **This is an example of a non-linear gamebook, in this case a fictional part of *Scorpion Swamp*. Here, the hero is free to wander in whatever direction they chose, provided there is a path headed that way, including retracing their steps to previous encounters.**

always, good play testing will be needed to ensure victory is achievable, and enjoyable to achieve.

Linear versus Nonlinear. Linear in this instance means a tree-like diagram of branching paragraphs down which your hero is funnelled or directed towards their ultimate chosen fate (see *Figure 4*). This is similar to the model of many *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks, particularly those of Ian Livingstone, where any slight deviation from the linear path is generally fatal for your character. Nonlinear adventures on the other hand are a twisted sprawl of paragraphs extending outwards in all directions to the limits of the gamebook, along which your hero is free to wander at will. Examples of this include *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks by the American Steve Jackson, such as *Scorpion Swamp* (see *Figure 5*) and *Robot Commando*, as well as the *Fabled Lands* series (which are probably the best exponents of this approach), and some *Fabled Lands*-inspired pastiches of my own (e.g. *Hills of Phoros*, *Isle of the Cyclops*). These two methods can be difficult to combine within the one adventure, but it can be done. One way is to occasionally switch from the linear style to a nonlinear variant such as the hub, where the hero has a series of choices radiating out from a central paragraph and is usually free to try all of them. This is often seen in the works of Keith Martin, such as the ruined city of Kabesh in *Master of Chaos* (see *Figure 6*), or the Palace of the Ice Elves in *Tower of Destruction*. A nastier nonlinear approach is the maze, where the hero gets completely lost within a tangle of interconnecting paragraphs while desperately searching for the exit. These maze sections may be mapped physically, as per the Maze of Zagor, in *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, or not, such as the numerous mini-mazes in *The Warlock's Way* (see *Figure 7*). Cleverly, there may be one simple mathematics-based rule to navigate the maze's correct path, as per the sinister and labyrinthine Whistling Heath in *Cities of Gold and Glory*. In terms of whether linear or nonlinear is preferable, it's really up to you and your intended readers. Some prefer linear, story-like adventures and dislike the aimless wandering of the nonlinear approach. Others do not care for what they feel is linear railroading and hand-waving, and instead enjoy the free exploration that makes the nonlinear style so similar to a literary MMORPG.



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The ruins of Kabesh contain several noteworthy landmarks; you may care to make a sketchmap of the area. You may visit each area only *once* – unless you are specifically instructed to the contrary in a later paragraph – so make a note of each of the areas as you visit them. You will not learn or find anything on a second visit which you haven't already discovered first time around, so return visits are pointless. After selecting one location, you will be referred back to this paragraph to select another place to visit. If after visiting all the locations you still have not found the entrance to the Chaos Pits of the Master of Chaos, your mission has failed and your adventure ends in disappointment and frustration!

The areas within the ruins, with compass notations for position, are:

Ruined Senate House (NW)	Turn to **42**
Ruined houses (W)	Turn to **155**
Old Temple (SSW)	Turn to **321**
Mausoleum (S)	Turn to **109**
Warehouses (SE)	Turn to **146**
Ruined Coliseum (ESE)	Turn to **356**
Nomad camp (E and NE)	Turn to **398**

Figure 6: **This is an example of a hub paragraph representing the ruined city of Kabesh, demonstrating a variant of non-linearity within the otherwise linear confines of *Master of Chaos*. The hero has seven choices to make, returning to this hub paragraph following the resolution of each choice, as they strive to discover the location of the Chaos Pits beneath the ruined city.**

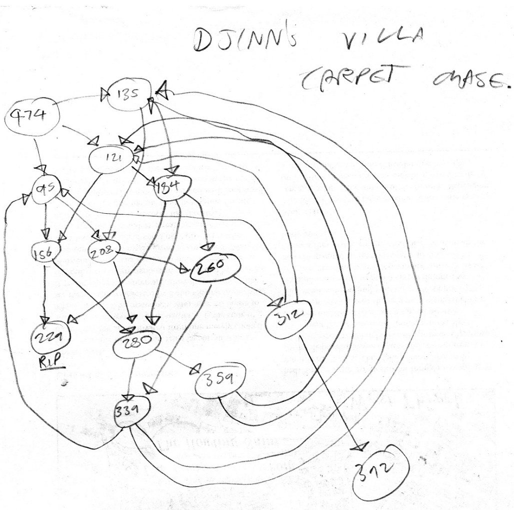


Figure 7: **The maze system – another example of non-linearity within a linear gamebook. In this case the maze takes the form of a flying carpet chase through the villa of a Djinn from *The Warlock's Way*. The entry point is at paragraph 474, and, aside from death through cumulative STAMINA loss, there are two exits – an instant death paragraph (229) and a successful escape (392).**

One True Path versus Multiple Paths. This is fairly obvious – one true path means that there is only one way to complete the gamebook, whereas multiple paths means that there are at least two ways to achieve victory, and sometimes many more. Some extreme nonlinear adventures, such as *Fabled Lands* again, may not even have any paths to victory at all. Most *Fighting Fantasy* adventures can be considered one true path books, with little tolerance for venturing beyond the author's prescribed route to success. On the other hand, the *Virtual Reality* gamebooks (especially those by Dave Morris), have both multiple paths and multiple endings, such as *Heart of Ice*, *Twist of Fate*, and *Down Among the Dead Men*. Again, in terms of what you should consider for your adventure, it comes down to personal preference. One true path gamebooks can be exciting challenges when done well, but all too often can become tedious and unplayable if the victory conditions are set too high. On the other hand, multiple path gamebooks can encourage repeated play-through to check out all the options, but generally only if well-written. Also, if victory is too easy to achieve, they can become just as boring as the one true path adventures. The trick, obviously, is to look for balance, but that remains a topic of discussion for another day.

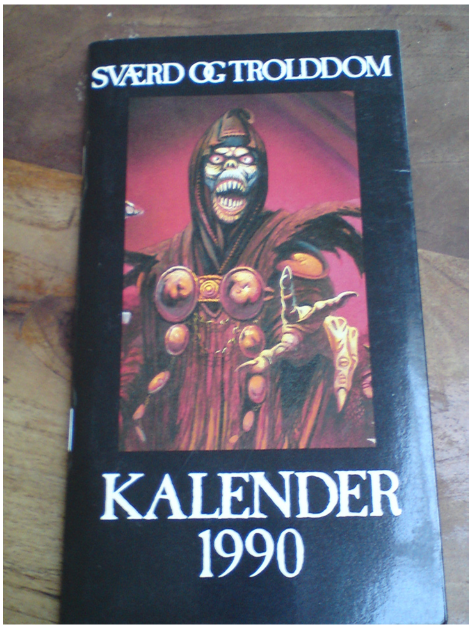
Once again, I've probably gone on for far too long, and laboured over things that may be self-evident to many of you (and apologies for that!). However, if there's anything you feel like commenting on or agreeing/disagreeing with, email me at greyarea13@hotmail.com. In the next issue of *Fighting Fantazine* we'll look at Stage Three: The Flowchart, so get your pencils, erasers, paper and artistic sensibilities ready!

www.fightingfantasycollector.co.uk

Collector **Jamie Fry** regales us with a visit to the lair of Ian Livingstone...

On the 28th November 2010 I had the pleasure of visiting the home of Ian Livingstone to collect signed books I will be selling on his behalf. I had only expected to visit him briefly, say hello, take the books and go, but no. It was freezing outside and to my amazement he asked me in to join him and his family for breakfast, a full English I might add. My fifteen minutes turned into two and a half hours of conversation and discovery. I learnt that Ian had chosen me to sell his books in recognition of my dedication to keeping the books alive. He went on to say without us (the fans) *Fighting Fantasy* might never have gone this far, he is saying it is us that keeps him writing and supporting it's continuation.

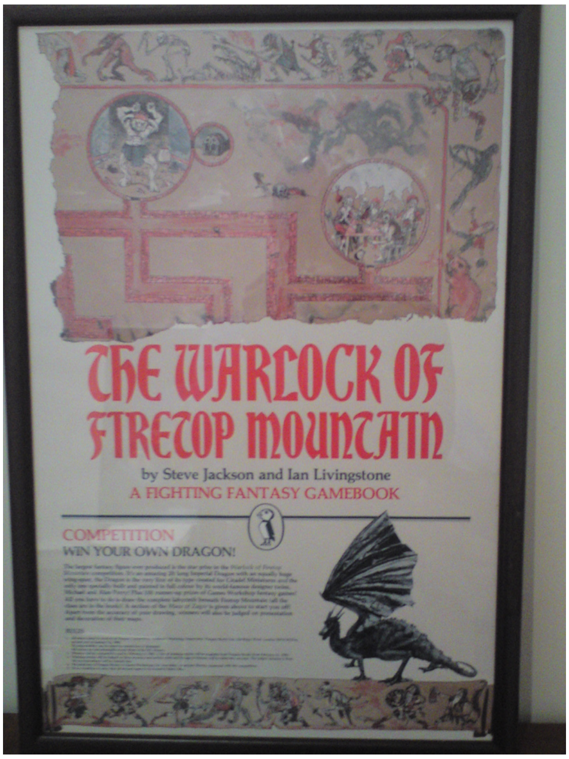
Where do I start, his library filled with board games and books, the room full of art and posters or upstairs where he stored his original manuscripts. You have to remember Ian and Steve (Jackson) founded Games Workshop and in its heyday the *White Dwarf* magazine represented something very different to what you see today in the magazine and shop. It wasn't just about Space Marines, Lord of the Rings or Warhammer, it was everything role-playing ever represented, those were the days and the younger generation enjoying this today may never appreciate how different it was then, think no computers and think table-top gaming with lead miniatures instead or where *Fighting Fantasy* books were concerned (and still are), a pencil, dice and a huge imagination.



On that note I will start with his library since I mentioned all the board games first. They filled, floor to ceiling, two of the walls. To say there were at least a few hundred may be an under estimate. From what I could tell they were all in very good condition and he had played at least two thirds of them. All of them appeared to be from his involvement in Games Workshop but others were present. He notably pointed out *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* and the *Legend of Zagor* board games. However, he did not have *Heroquest*, another, but unrelated favourite of mine, although Games Workshop were responsible for the advanced version, not MB. The second thing I noticed on walking in the room was the life size model of Lara Croft (*Tomb Raider*) from his involvement with Eidos.

His *Fighting Fantasy* collection commanded a very large, tall bookcase in its own right. The books he gave me are mostly duplicate copies from his own collection. Considering how old the books are now (30 years in 2012), every single one was as if they had just come from the publishers, with few exceptions. He showed me a first edition copy of *The Warlock of the Firetop Mountain* that puts mine to shame. He had the foresight to shrink-wrap every first he ever obtained. All the known books were there, more than one copy in most cases, box sets (although he did not have all of them), software packs and lots of foreign versions, mostly complete sets. He also had the additional material as well (*Advanced Fighting Fantasy* etc.) dotted around the bookcase. Of interest here was a Danish (third of A4 size) item – SVAERD OG TROLDDOM KALENDER 1990, translated literally to Sword and Sorcery Calendar, though it looked more like a pocket diary.

Around the corner was another room, but this time it was full of portfolios containing original art, prints or posters. Others were contained in picture frames, not yet making it to the walls where, I learnt they had resided in his previous house but hadn't quite made it this time. In fact a lot of what I saw was still in boxes from his last move some years previously. Following closer inspection I managed to see with my own eyes original art for *Casket of Souls*, *The Forest of Doom*, *City of Thieves*, *Island of the Lizard King* and *Deathtrap Dungeon* by Iain McCaig. *Caverns of the Snow Witch* and *Crypt of the Sorcerer* by Les Edwards, *Trial of Champions* by Brian Williams, and *Freeway Fighter* by Jim Burns. All of these being titles Ian had written. A few prints and posters later that I had seen before and/or have, I was amazed to see one I hadn't. It is incredible these gems keep surfacing. I shouldn't have expected any less but you can never be sure, however I remained optimistic I would find something new and I did. This object was contained within a picture frame to show it off and rightly so. It was an A2 poster advertising *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* competition in 1982 to win the 2ft long Imperial Dragon by Citadel Miniatures. The words on the poster are as follows:


THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
A FIGHTING FANTASY GAMEBOOK
COMPETITION
WIN YOUR OWN DRAGON!

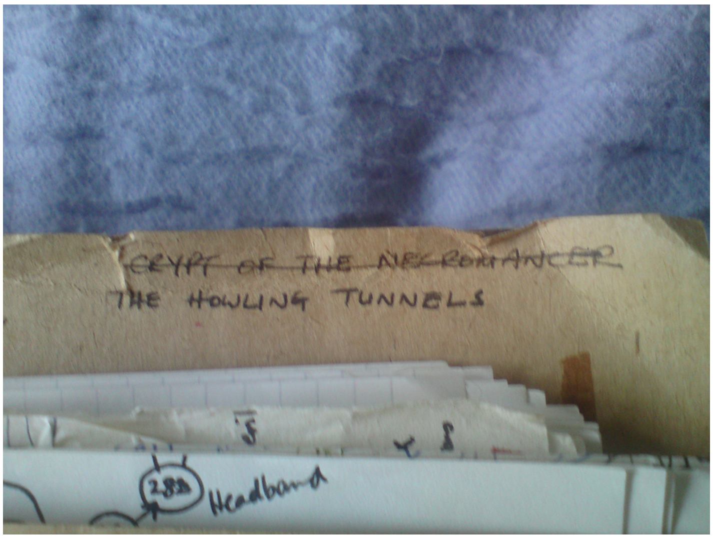
> *WIN YOUR OWN DRAGON! The largest fantasy figure ever produced is the star prize in the* Warlock of Firetop Mountain *competition. It's an amazing 2ft long Imperial Dragon with an equally huge wing-span, the Dragon is the very first of its type created for Citadel Miniatures and the only one specially built and painted in full colour by its world-famous designer twins, Michael and Alan Perry! Plus 100 runner-up prizes of Games Workshop fantasy games! All you have to do is draw the complete labyrinth beneath Firetop Mountain (all the clues are in the book)! A section of the Maze of Zagor is given above to start you off! Apart from the accuracy of your drawing, winners will also be judged on presentation and decoration of their maps.*

And so the rules follow and the competition ended January 14th 1983. That is nearly 27 years ago! I think I have mentioned the Dragon before and asked if anyone knew who the winner was, so if you know of its whereabouts or one of the winners of the other runner-up prizes let me know, if it even survived? By the way, Ian had a few spares of these posters but wouldn't part with one for my collection – shame.

Before I talk about the final room which held all his manuscripts etc of the books I must mention all the original hand-drawn paragraph maps for his books, some in frames, some loose that I found dotted around the place. Each one cello-taped together on cardboard and a lot of the time the writing was in pen. The pièce de résistance of my visit was easily getting to see inside the folders of the manuscripts for the gamebooks he wrote. I had a good rifle through *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, *City of Thieves* and *Deathtrap Dungeon* folders. All contained hand-written notes for each paragraph, original concept artwork of differing types and letters from publishers among many other notes and ideas. Ian mentioned that a typed manuscript he showed me was typed by his then girlfriend, as much of it was done that way then. In the Warlock folder he unfolded the original map he had drawn for the first part of the adventure up to the river (Steve doing the maze beyond the river, the first and last book they did together). Interestingly I also witnessed first hand the working titles for number 26, starting with *Crypt of the Necromancer*, deemed to be to macabre by the then publishers, Penguin. How ironic, considering the release of Jonathan Greens latest offering in Series 2 of the re-releases, *Night of the Necromancer*, oh how times have changed. This title was crossed out in favour of *The Howling Tunnels*, again not in keeping with the book contents and Ian finally got his way with *Crypt of the Sorcerer*, but he wasn't entirely pleased.

Enough of that, but before I let it go altogether, I am still making an inventory of everything he gave me, including copies of the *Warlock* magazine in Japanese. I will be using ebay to sell them (under the title of my website – fighting fantasy collector) unless I hear from collector's directly that show an interest in acquiring signed books by Ian. Ian has asked that at least half of the proceeds go to a charity of his choice; it is likely to go to a gaming charity he is patron of.

What will 2011 bring us? *The House of Hell* movie, planning for the 30th year anniversary in 2012, more mobile phone apps, a new *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* system or a new adventure from Ian (probably his last and he wouldn't let on a thing). Probably (hopefully) all of the above and some! I was going to write about autographs in this edition but was side-tracked by this visit, maybe next time. I certainly intend to post some photographs to my website of the things I speak of, so watch out for those and I will also be releasing a new version of my guide to reflect changes in the last year.



FIGHTING DANTASY

Dan revisits the Fighting Fantasy series, one gamebook at a time...

Remember reading your first *Fighting Fantasy* adventure? The desperate search for the items you need to win, the frantic dice rolls as you fight to stay in one piece mere paragraphs from your goal? **Dan Satherley** has decided to recreate those tense moments from our childhoods by working his way through the series book by book and recording his efforts as he goes.

33
Steve JACKSON AND
Ian LIVINGSTONE
PRESENT
SKY LORD
FF
FIGHTING FANTASY
TM

Sky Lord is the last science-fiction *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, and it's not difficult to understand why – it's pretty dang strange, and perhaps takes a few too many liberties with what a *Fighting Fantasy* adventure is supposed to be.

It doesn't start out too badly though – despite a lengthy introduction/mission section, which I normally hate – the back story as at least interesting. Maybe because it begins as a cross between *Star Wars* (must infiltrate planet alone, destroy defences fro the inside, making possible full-scale attack) and *Babylon 5* (huge races fighting, taking everyone else out in their wake), then goes off on an awesomely random tangent.

An ex-human resources employee of the galactic king was caught cloning the staff in order to collect their pay cheques, and was inevitably caught and fired. He then decided to get revenge by pretending to be a famous cosmetic surgeon, offering his services to the king's wife for free. She accepted, and he basically butchered her so she looked like the cat woman, and went into hiding, where he (also inevitably) began building an army of vicious killer dog-headed super warriors.

Err, what? Okay...

So I head off on my journey to his planet, but first completely fail by choosing the wrong method of interstellar travel. I can 'time travel' or 'light travel', I choose time, and apparently enter 'the fourth dimension'. Which I thought we were already in, to be honest. My ship somehow gets covered in space weed, which I have to get out and fight off...?

I think perhaps the author was 'battling' some space weed of his own when he wrote this book.

The only way to get it off apparently is to fly into the atmosphere of a nearby planet and burn it off. I should have predicted it wouldn't go well, and sure enough, my ship was hit by lightning (how freakin' close was I flying to this planet?!), sending it rocketing down into a lake a la *Planet of the Apes*, where it sank. Without Jedi powers, a la *Empire Strikes Back*, that's where it stayed.

Luckily though, my R2 unit was intact, and started wandering off, saying it needed to find its master, a la *A New Hope*. I followed, and soon came across an even larger ship, that wasn't stuck. Sweet! Unfortunately it was defended by a whole range of mutants, and after killing a bunch, the book told me I'd given up trying to steal it. Oh, really?

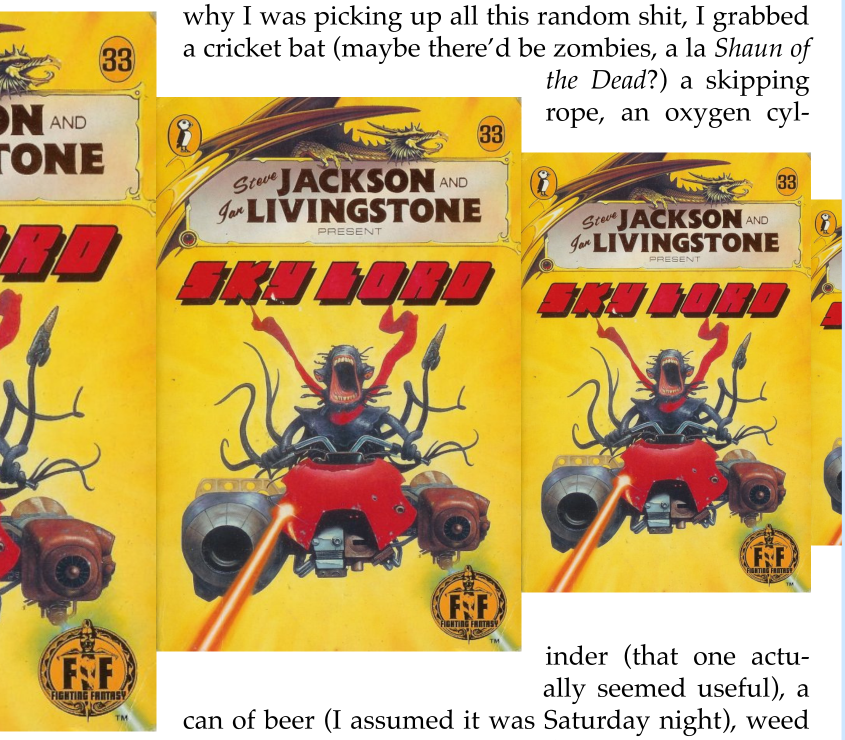
So we found the R2 unit's Obi Wan, and he fixed my ship by taking it back in time so it was never hit by lightning, and obviously messing with the space-time continuum in a way this wouldn't create a

PLOT
42.7%
GAMEPLAY
38.0%
ATMOSPHERE
44.7%
ILLUSTRATIONS
44.0%

OVERALL
42.3%

paradox of any sort.

Anyway... so I headed off, and found myself attending a distress signal from another ship, and it turned out the staff were being eaten by orange blobs. I know this because one of the staff, in the process of being eaten, politely warned me against using my blaster weapon due to the gas leak. That one that isn't killing me already. Hmmm. So I'm next forced on a seemingly random wander through the ship, picking up random objects when all I really wanted to was get the fark out of there. Without any indication of what would be useful and what wouldn't, and only the slightest hint as to why I was picking up all this random shit, I grabbed a cricket bat (maybe there'd be zombies, a la *Shaun of the Dead*?) a skipping rope, an oxygen cylinder (that one actually seemed useful), a can of beer (I assumed it was Saturday night), weed killer (again useful) and something called a 'viscous negater' (no freakin' idea, but I could have done with one in my uni debating days). Turns out each of these items had a rating of how much it would slow down the blob should I need to escape, and the items I collected didn't rate high enough - though the beer did surprisingly well.



The blob ate me. That's about all I can say, as that's pretty much all the text said. No gory description, nothing. I guess it didn't need to chew.

I didn't even make it close to the bad dude's planet, let alone save billions of my species. D'oh, sorry about that...

A pretty random book, and I wouldn't be surprised if it was the sole reason *Fighting Fantasy* didn't get back into science-fiction again. The Titan/Allansia books were always my favourite ones anyway, so it's no big loss in my view.

I still can't decide whether that thing on the cover is supposed to be the title character, either. If so, cool. Surprised George Lucas didn't rip it off for *The Phantom Menace*.

Adapted from Fightingdantasy.blogspot.com

turn to paragraph 1.

COMING IN ISSUE #6
APRIL 2011

ESCAPE FROM THE SORCERER

by **Sunil Prasannan**

The kingdom of Alkemis has come under repeated attack from neighbouring Agra. Unable to hold back the hordes of Lizard Men and chaotic Asuras led by the evil sorcerer Grudar Kreshnel, YOU and a few dozen fellow survivors were captured. One by one your fellow countrymen have been brutally executed, until only YOU remain. Will YOU be able to escape from the Sorcerer?

the fact of fiction:
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN

The very first *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook goes under the microscope to tease out a few facts about **Steve Jackson** and **Ian Livingstone**'s first adventure set in the land of Titan...

THE ADVENTURE GAME

In the third part of his article on writing a *Fighting Fantasy* adventure, **Andrew Wright** provides guidance on the exciting world of flowcharts...

AELOUS RAVEN AND THE WRATH OF THE SEA-WITCH
THE BOOK IN WHICH YOU ARE THE HERO
CHRONICLE OF HEROES

and much, much more!